THE GREAT EQUATION

AN EXPOSITION OF THE DOCTRINE OF ADVAITA VEDANTA

R. KRISHNASWAMI AIYAR

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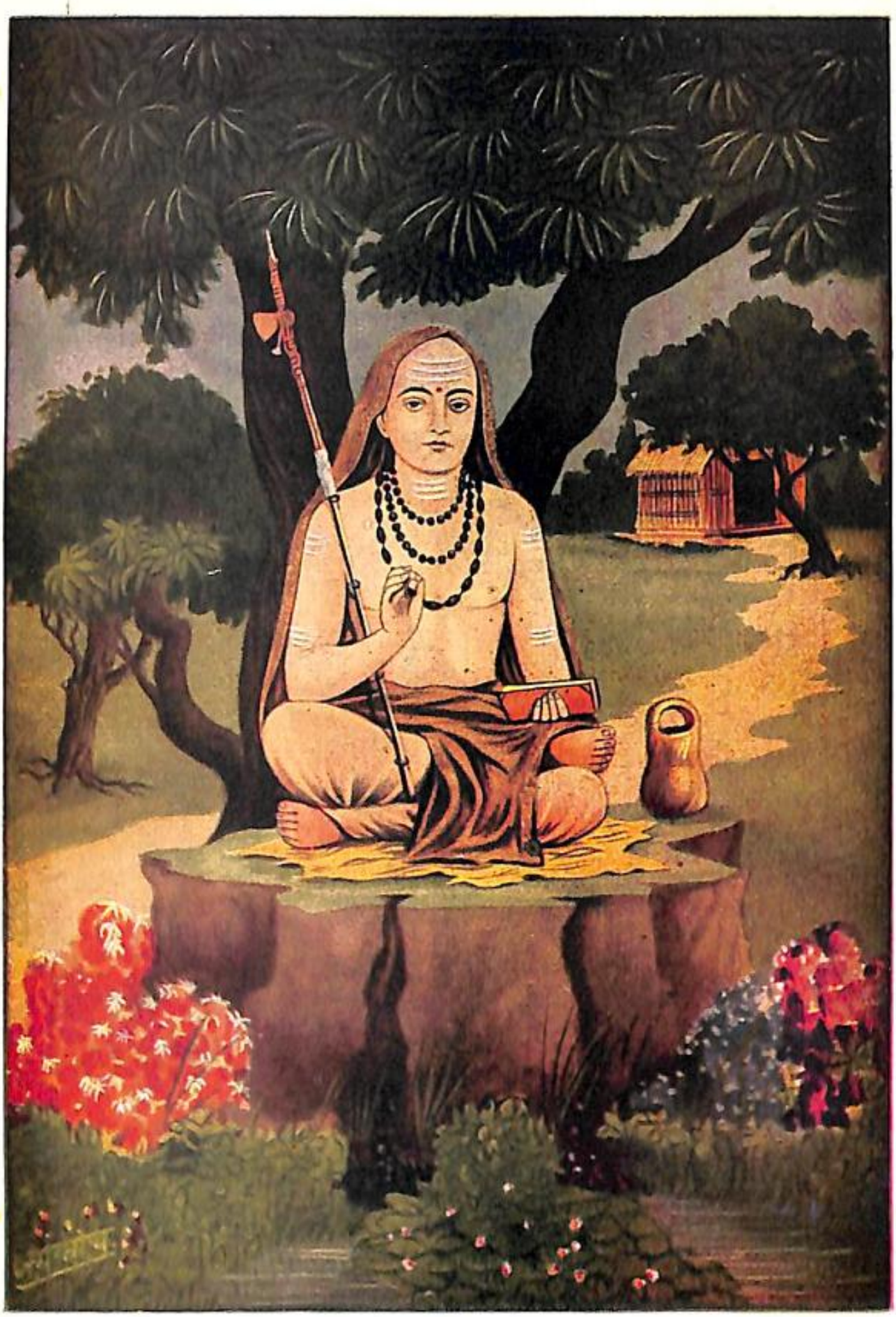

ŚRĪ ŚANKARA BHAGAVATPĀDĀCHĀRYA

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THE GREAT EQUATION

An Exposition of the Doctrine of Advaita Vedanta

By

R. KRISHNASWAMI AIYAR

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PREFACE

It has been my endeavour here to enunciate and elucidate the doctrine of Advaita as preached in the Upanishads and explained by Sri Sankara Bhagavatpadacharya, in a language which may be easily understood even by those who have had no previous grounding in the subject. It is for the reader to judge how far I have succeeded in doing so. I may mention that first I wrote this matter mainly with a view to clarifying my own thoughts on the subject, but the appreciation that the manuscript elicited from scholars who had no reason to be partial towards me has emboldened me to publish it. A few chapters of this book were published as articles in "The Hindu Mind" and "The Vedanta Kesari" and almost the entire matter was published as a series of articles in the "Kalyana Kalpataru". They have been now completely revised.

I cannot adequately express my grateful thanks to my esteemed friends Sri David MacIver and Sri Sudhakar Dikshit of Chetana Ltd., Bombay, for many a valuable suggestion as regards the language and also the matter and for the great personal interest they have taken in getting this book published as a companion volume to "Outlines of Vedanta".

My heartfelt thanks are also due to the Ajanta Printers of Secunderabad for so neatly printing it.

R. Krishnaswamy Aiyar

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THE GREAT EQUATION

CHAPTER I

AN AXIOM

1. THE STATE OF FREEDOM

All religions in the world without a single exception postulate as our final goal a state of existence which is salvation or liberation from this pain-mixed imperfect life. There is much difference of opinion between them as to the exact nature of that state: whether or no we still have some kind of body therein, whether our experience in it is sensual or supra-sensual, whether the state is within the bounds of matter or beyond them, and so on. But all are agreed that the state is one of eternal existence, which does not under any circumstances cease to be, that it is a condition of supreme illumination in which there is no room for darkness or ignorance, and that it implies an ineffable joy in which there is no mixture of pain or sorrow. To put it in terms of the Vēdānta, the ultimate goal of life postulated by all religions is a state of *Sat* (unqualified existence), *Chit* (unqualified knowledge) and *Ānanda* (unqualified bliss).

No religion tolerates for a moment the suggestion that a person who has attained salvation may again become subject to the limitations of our daily life. If there were such a possibility, salvation would cease to be the final goal of life and would not attract serious aspirants. It is accepted

on all hands that, if a man attains salvation, he attains it once for all and continues in that state of illumination or joy for ever. Once attained, that state never ceases.

2. ITS NATURE

We need hardly say that, situated as we are in the midst of pain and sorrow, delusion and ignorance, *we* cannot claim to be in a state of liberation now. To us, therefore, the state of liberation is something which *has to be attained* hereafter by appropriate effort. The state of liberation will be attained by us as the result of our own exertions in that direction. Lord Śrī Krishna enunciates, as a well-known axiom, that "Death is verily certain for whatever is born" (Gītā II, 27). This axiom, like any other, is to be accepted as true and universal, requiring no proof; but proof, in the sense of verification, may be had. If we consider the nature of things in the world before us, we cannot find anything which is born but does not die. It may be that some things are able to last longer than others, but it cannot be denied that there is an end to all things born. If, then, the axiom is emphatic in proclaiming that whatever is born or caused cannot endure for ever, how can the state of illumination, which is the result of our exertions, continue for ever? This state also, being an acquired one, must cease at some time. Are all the religions then mistaken in assuming that the state of liberation, once reached, endures for ever? And if they are mistaken in so vital a matter regarding the ultimate goal of life, can they have the slightest claim to any one's allegiance?

Advaita Vēdānta alone boldly tackles and answers these questions. "Whatever is born must die" is a universal proposition and admits of no exception. If the state of liberation is born, it must also die. In as much as all are agreed that this state does not cease, the only logical hypothesis on

which we can sustain its deathlessness is that it is *not born*. Ordinarily a thing is said to be born when it did not exist for us before the moment of birth, and is said to die when it does not exist for us after the moment of death. When we say, therefore, that a thing born must die, we mean that, as non-existence preceded its birth, non-existence will succeed its death. In other words, the existence of every born thing is hemmed in on either side by non-existence.

An eternal existence, on the other hand, is incompatible with any non-existence, precedent or subsequent. It cannot be born and it cannot die. The state of liberation, if it is to endure for ever, cannot be born. If it cannot be born and yet is to continue for ever, it must be that it *is*, without being born. The state of liberation is not something which has to come into existence at some future time as the result of our exertions, but is a *present* state, inherent in us without the necessity of being created anew. Being a present, inherent state, no effort is needed or is possible to *create* it, for, if it were possible to create it, it could not but be impermanent. It will be illogical to say that imperfect man *becomes* in that state a perfect being; if he can possibly so become, imperfection cannot be an essential attribute of his.

Further, if perfection can be born, it cannot be permanent. There can, therefore, be no "becoming" here, in any sense of the term. The only possible hypothesis is, that a perfect *being*, mistakenly thinking himself imperfect, appreciates his mistake and realises and retains his perfect nature for ever. The state of illumination is the normal condition of all beings, but is suspended, as it were for the time being by this mistake of theirs, this ignorance of their essential nature. A prisoner whose hands are manacled no doubt must make an effort to burst the shackles that bind him, but no independent effort is needed to give him his

freedom, for freedom is not the *result* of an effort but is only his natural state, which he resumes as a matter of course. Similarly, effort is needed only to get rid of the ignorance of our real nature. In fact, it is this ignorance of our inherent state as a state of freedom that is responsible both for the bondage and for the need to break through it. The many kinds of training and practice prescribed by the various religions of the world, whether they say so openly or no, cannot possibly be a means to *attain* salvation but represent attempts at a gradual conquest and ultimate annihilation of the ignorance which blinds us to our own glorious nature. This is the doctrine of *Avidyā*, which is virtually assumed as the philosophic basis of all religions, but is nowhere so boldly enunciated and proclaimed as in Advaita Vēdānta.

3. SOME QUESTIONS

A host of questions arises as soon as such a doctrine is enunciated. What is the reason for the ever-existent, all-conscious, supremely joyous Soul allowing itself to be overclouded by this ignorance, and that to such an extent as to consider itself possessed of just the opposite attributes? What could be the moment at which this strange phenomenon occurred? What is the manner of its happening? .....And so on. All these "Whats" resolve themselves into the simple interrogatives, Why? When? Where? How? Who? etc. The question "*Why?*" is answered by some pious thinkers by saying, "It is God's will", an answer which is really no answer, but hides behind it the greatest blasphemy, since it attributes wanton cruelty to God. Some answer the "*When?*" by saying "When I was born," and others, "When the fruit of the forbidden tree was tasted". More advanced schools of thought evade the question by pushing the "*when*" to an indefinite past or by postulating

that ignorance exists from time beginningless. The place where it originated is said by some to be the Garden of Eden, but it is certainly not the place where *our* ignorance originated, for we are not aware of ever having had even a look at that enchanting garden. The enunciators of this theory evidently hold that the primal ignorance of Adam is a disease inherited by all his progeny. The question "*How?*" is answered by some with "God said, 'Let it be,' and there it was". A very simple answer, no doubt, but one which explains nothing. Others trace this ignorance to an inscrutable and inexplicable power - an equally unsatisfactory answer. To the "*Who?*" some would say that God Himself is responsible for imposing this ignorance on us—evidently in a mere spirit of mischief, for He gains nothing by doing so. Others affirm that we have brought it upon ourselves—the most foolish possible thing to do. Similar questions are also answered in similar ways; but none of the answers is really satisfactory or explains this strange phenomenon of ignorance and its offshoots in the world. Here again it is only Advaita Vēdānta that boldly and uncompromisingly puts forward its answer.

4. THE BASIC MISTAKE

"How did a thing happen?", "When did it happen?", "Where did it happen?", "Why did it happen?", "Who made it happen?",—These questions which relate to the method, the time, the place, the reason and the author of a particular happening are all based on the tacit assumption that such a thing *did* happen; that is, they assume without question that there is an answer in the affirmative to the primal question, "Did the thing happen?" Advaita gives an emphatically negative answer to this question and points out the baselessness and needlessness of further enquiries on the presumption of an answer in the affirmative. It enunciates

the somewhat startling proposition that Avidyā has *not* attached itself to us at all. If, by the word "us" we understand the *deluded* souls, ignorance has been always with them and there is no sense in saying that ignorance attached itself to them, for they are already ignorant. If, by "us" we understand the *undeluded* souls, ignorance has never been with them and it is impossible to presume that ignorance, an attribute diametrically opposed to their essential nature, could attach itself to them. In either case, therefore, there could have been no origin to *Avidyā*.

Further, if the "how" or "when" of a mistake can have a logical answer, it cannot possibly be called a mistake at all. The question, "when did the snake appear in the rope?" assumes that the snake really appears—a manifest absurdity. The deluded man sees only the snake; the knowing man sees only the rope. There is no one in existence to see the snake *in* the rope, for such a perception is possible only if there are two things, the container and the contained, simultaneously existing and perceived, as is an apple in a jar, to use the illustration of Śrī Śankarāchārya, the apostle of Advaita. The snake and the rope are two distinct entities, which are mutually exclusive and neither of them can possibly come out of the other. If, however, we actually witness a snake coming out of a rope, the snake must be as real as the rope itself and no element of mistake can enter into the perception. *Avidyā*, therefore, is unsusceptible of a logical explanation, not because we are unable to find this, but because, if there were a logical explanation, it would cease to be Avidyā. Hence, it is said to be *anirvachanīyā*—inexplicable. This is not a confession of our inability but a definition of its essential nature. Many have been the misconceptions that have gathered around this statement because it has not been understood correctly,

and various have been the objections raised against the teaching of Advaita on the basis of such misconceptions.

5. THE BOLD ADVAITĪ

If we are essentially ever-existent, all-conscious and all-happy, do we not arrogate to ourselves the very attributes of Godhead? Almost all the religions of the world answer this question with an emphatic "Yes", for fear of blaspheming God by claiming equality with Him, and they therefore say that we are made only "in the form of God" and that we only *resemble* Him in our essential nature, but are yet as far asunder from Him as the two poles. Here again, it is the Advaita Vēdāntī who, leaving aside all false sentiment and relying upon the stern logic of truth, has the boldness to answer the question with an equally emphatic "No", and to demonstrate that the crime of blasphemy is really on those who, for fear of losing their identity in the all-comprehensive Godhead, postulate for themselves an existence eternally independent of God. The Vēdāntī has the courage to proclaim that the individual soul *minus Avidyā*, which gives it individuality, is verily the Supreme Itself. He holds that only by elimination of this *Avidyā* can one's true identity with the Supreme be discovered. This again is a proposition which shocks those who have not the patience to understand its truth nor the courage to admit it, even if convinced.

It will be our endeavour in these pages to present the Advaita doctrine to the common man, avoiding as far as possible the use of technical expressions which may tend to confuse him.

CHAPTER II

THE SUPREME BEING

1. NATURE OF BEING

There is not a single religion in the world which does not describe God as the Supreme Being. People are so accustomed to using these epithets for God that they rarely stop to consider their significance. These words, by their very familiarity, convey no impression. But surely they are not used for God quite at random and without sense. Let us first consider the word "being".

In brief, a "being" is that which *is*. It is an axiomatic truth that a characteristic which is of the essence of a thing can never be absent from it; for, if it could be absent and the thing could survive its absence, it could not possibly be of the essence of that thing. If heat, for example, is the essence of fire, there can be no fire without heat. If there could be a heatless fire, we could not possibly call heat an essential characteristic of fire. Take another simple truth: Two characteristics, which are directly opposed to each other and mutually antagonistic, cannot possibly characterise the same thing at the same time. If cold is the opposite of heat and heat is an essential characteristic of fire, it is impossible to think of a fire that is cold, for coldness and its opposite, heat, can never co-exist. Therefore, expressions

like "Fire chills", "Light darkens", and so on, are utterly absurd, because of the inherent incompatibility of ideas. This incompatibility is not partial or relative, but absolute. Under no circumstances can chilling be predicated of fire. If then God is Being, the word God can never be the subject of any sentence which has "is not" for its predicate; for "being" and "is not" are mutually exclusive and antagonistic expressions, which cannot possibly co-exist, the one in apposition to the other.

2. TIME AND SPACE

It is thus impossible to frame a sentence beginning with "God is not" and to make sense out of it by adding more words. If "God is not" represents an impossible conception, we cannot make it possible by further qualifying it—as, for instance, "God is not *there*" "God is not *then*" "God is not *this*", and so on. The word "Being" itself denotes *present* existence and this presentness is not limited to the immediate present before us, for God has always been Being throughout the infinite past and will continue to be Being throughout the endless future. That is, in as much as Being is an essential characteristic of God, there could not possibly be any moment of time when He "was not" or "will not be". In other words, "God *was*", in the sense that he has now ceased to be, and "God *will be*", in the sense that He has to come into existence hereafter, are both incompatible with the definition of God as Being. But the very same expressions are perfectly correct, if we understand them simply as meaning that God did exist in the past and will continue to exist in the future. "Being" then, to deserve its name, must exist in the eternally present; that is, it must have existed from time beginningless, it must exist now and it must continue to exist throughout time without end. Its existence is not limited by the

division of time into past, present and future. It subsists throughout and transcends all these three divisions.

"God is not *there*" is, equally, an impossible conception. for Being can never function as the subject of a predicate with "is not". The existence of God, therefore, in any particular place or division of space can not also be denied. That is, there is not a pin-point of space where you can postulate the non-existence of God the Being. To the right, to the left, to the front, to the back, above and below, howsoever far space may extend, He is there. He is not limited by the divisions in space and His existence extends throughout and transcends all such divisions.

3. THE ALL

Barring some crude faiths, which limit the existence of God to an effulgent throne in the highest heavens, almost all religions are agreed in ascribing to God eternality and omni-presence, that is, transcendence over time and space. But they decline to extend the same logical considerations a step further and to accept the proposition that, along with the expression "God is not *there*", the expression "God is *not this*" is an impossibility, for here also "God" has to be the subject of "is not", and the addition of the word "this" cannot make any difference to that impossibility. They forget that, if we can say that God is not this thing or that thing, we are putting in apposition two diametrically opposed conceptions, namely, the subject God, who is Being, and the predicate, "is not", which is a denial of Being. The only logical corollary of our defining God as Being has to be that God *is* this, God *is* that, and so on. It is not necessary to consider the conceptions denoted by the words "that", etc., independently, if we include in the denotation of the word "this" everything which can possibly be experienced now or in the future or could have been ex-

perienced in the past; that is, everything which could have been or can be called "this" by anybody, at any time, anywhere. Giving this wide and comprehensive meaning to the word "this", our corollary will show that God is everything and that we cannot say that God is not anything. To paraphrase this again, every object of conception and perception is God and is not distinct from Him, for if it were distinct, we would be enabled to say that God is not that object, an impossible and self-contradictory statement, as already pointed out.

If God is everything, does this mean that He is even ourselves, the perceivers and the experiencers of the universe, and that He is even the variegated universe which is perceived and experienced by us? Systems other than the Vēdānta are afraid of giving an affirmative answer to this question. They say that God is the Ruler, who guides, rewards or punishes the souls functioning in the universe and creates, sustains or dissolves the universe itself and that it is not possible to equate God with either the soul or the universe. But the Advaitī does not hesitate in the least to equate Him with the soul and the universe, for if this were not possible we would be virtually denying God the attribute of Being, by admitting the possibility of his functioning as the subject of a sentence which has "is not" as its predicate. The Advaitī proceeds to enunciate the somewhat daring proposition, at which other systems of thought tremble and recoil, that God *is* the soul and God *is* the universe.

4. ABSOLUTE GREATNESS

Now for the word "Supreme": God is acknowledged by all religions as supreme. As this adjective is not qualified by any other word, we shall have no justification for imposing any kind of limitation on it. "Supreme in what?" is a superfluous and limiting question which is not justified

when the word "Supreme" is used singly. The supremeness, unqualified as it is, is absolute and not relative. God, being supreme, cannot act as the subject in a sentence beginning with "God is not Supreme". He is supreme therefore, in all conceivable aspects. Time, which witnesses the birth and death of innumerable worlds and of all that inhabits them, is certainly great, but is great only in longevity. Space, which holds in an infinitesimal part of its womb the sun and the stars and everything that lives or moves is certainly great, but is great only in expanse. God, the absolutely Supreme, must be free, therefore, from any limitations which time or space may impose. He must transcend them both. What does it matter how rich a man is? He would seem great to those who have to depend upon him or to those who envy his riches; but he is certainly not great in the eyes of a saint, who is able to lead a life independent of him, and who cares not for riches. The rich man, howsoever great he may think himself to be in worldly circles, will realise his littleness in the presence of the saint who wants or expects nothing from him.

It will be illogical to ascribe absolute supremacy to God as long as one feels that he himself and the universe have an existence independent of God. The existence of any other thing, be it a soul or a mere speck of dust, limits the greatness of God to that extent, for we will have to admit that God, howsoever great He may be, does not include and comprehend that soul or that particular speck of dust. To be able to postulate, therefore, absolute supremacy of God, we shall have to deny the independent existence of souls and matter and merge them in the Supreme God. The schools of thought other than the Advaita fight shy of this conclusion and try their best to avoid it. The Advaitī alone, with his characteristic boldness and unflinching regard for truth, accepts the proposition that the souls

as well as the universe must be denied existence independent of God, and that they exist only because they are God.

Thus, whether we consider the full significance of the word "Being", or whether we guage the implications of the word "Supreme", the two words most commonly used with reference to God, we learn that He is beyond all limitations of time and space and that He has to be equated with the individual soul, the experiencer, as well as with the universe, the experienced, if only to justify the use of either of these epithets for Him.

5. A NOTE OF WARNING

It may be necessary to warn the unwary reader that the Advaita system is not based solely on such an *a priori* reasoning as indicated above. The Upanishads proclaim emphatically and in unmistakable terms "*This soul* is Brahman (the Great)", "*All this* is verily Brahman", and so on. The Advaitī takes his firm stand on these statements and with the aid of rigorous reasoning demonstrates their truth. He does not rely solely upon his powers of abstract reasoning, for he knows and acknowledges that, as there is no limit to the intellectual capacity of man, the "settled" conclusions of today may be disturbed or discarded tomorrow. He knows that there can be no finality in human conclusions. Therefore, he bases his doctrines on the firm rock of revelation, the eternal teachings of the Vēdānta. Revelation is confirmed by the experience of those who, with unwavering faith and perseverence, have trod the prescribed paths and realised the truth. However, while depending upon revelation the Advaitī does not minimise the value of reasoning as a guide to truth. At the same time he does not overestimate it, for he realises its limitations. Without the light of revelation to point out the goal and the path to it, all the attempts of intellectual reasoning are mere gropings in the dark, leading nowhere.

CHAPTER III

THE LURE OF THE ABNORMAL

1. THE BACKGROUND

If God is *present* in us and in everything around us, how does it happen that we do not perceive Him ? Paradoxical as it may seem, it is just the omnipresence of God that stands in the way of our recognising His presence. When the reader is absorbed in reading these lines, does he realise even for a moment that they cannot be read, or even exist at all, if they are not printed on paper ? While reading this matter, he is at the same time actually looking at the sheets of paper on which it is printed. The paper underlies, permeates and forms the substratum for the contents of the printed matter, for every word of it, for every letter of every word and for every curve or angle of every letter. It is insistently present throughout. All the same, does the reader pay attention to the paper when he is reading this matter ? Can he read, understand and appreciate the thought-content of these lines, if his attention is attracted to the paper ? The existence of paper as the material background of these lines is practically ignored when they hold his attention. Simply because of the reader's attention being elsewhere, it cannot be said that the paper does not exist ; for, if it did not exist, these lines as such could not exist at all.

There is a story of two rustics who were discussing between themselves the relative usefulness of the sun and the moon. A third stepped in and decided that the moon was the more useful of the two, as she shone during the night when all was dark, while the sun shone, quite unnecessarily, during the day when everything was bright. It is this rustic's mentality that we are having when we perceive the world and yet ignore God. Forgetting that everything was bright during the day, and that the day itself was possible, only because of the sun, he dismissed the sun as an unnecessary factor. Similarly we forget every moment of our lives that the world is perceived and becomes perceivable only because it has God as its material background which underlies, permeates, and forms the substratum for the world, and so we dismiss God from the world as quite an unnecessary factor.

2. THE UNINTERESTING NORMAL

Why do we forget this? When you meet a friend, you ask him, "How do you do?" He may reply, "Quite well, thank you." Do you then pursue the enquiry by asking him "Why are you quite well? What is the matter?". If you choose to put such questions, he will doubt your sanity. If, in answer to your first question, he replies, "Thank you, but I am not quite well for the last one week", you will be quite justified in pursuing the enquiry by asking him "Why, what is the matter with you?" Where lies the difference? Why does the answer "Quite well" not admit of any further enquiry? And why does the answer "Not quite well" admit of such further enquiry?

A person who usually dresses himself in pure white comes to you dressed as usual. Do you then ask him "You are dressed in white, Why? What is the matter?". But if he comes dressed in black, you will certainly be justified in

asking him such questions. To be dressed in white is as much a fact as the other. But why does the former not admit of the questions *Why* and *What*, while the latter does?

Suppose another person comes to you limping, with a bandage on his toe. You will at once ask him "Why, what is the matter with your toe?" The toe is after all an insignificant part of the body and in area or volume is very small in comparison to the rest of the body. The remaining portion of the body is quite alright and yet you do not tell him "I am very glad to see that the major portion of your body is quite alright". If you did make such a remark, he would stare at you and perhaps take it as an offence. Why should the diseased minor part of the body require such special recognition, ignoring the major portion which is healthy?

There are lots of pigs screeching themselves hoarse. Nobody takes the trouble of paying for their queer music. But if a *man* were to begin to screech like a pig he would at once gather around him the children of the neighbourhood who gladly part with their pocket money to witness this performance. Why this costly curiosity when they can hear the same type of screeching more easily from the pigs themselves?

A thoughtful consideration of these examples, and similar others which may suggest themselves to us, will show that enquiry is started, and curiosity aroused, *only* when there is something out of the normal. Only novelty interests us and requires an explanation. The normal is uninteresting, because of its very normality and is ordinarily ignored for the very same reason. It is only the abnormal that attracts. The newspapers will have no subscribers or readers if they recorded only the routine incidents of our daily life. It is the murder and arson cases that make them interesting to some; others are attracted by the news about

cyclones and floods. It is even more so in public life. A political leader is able to interest the public only as long as he offers new and even fantastic theories or makes exaggerated promises. The moment he becomes normal, he becomes uninteresting. It is so in every sphere of life. Truth cannot possibly interest us, for it is, by its very nature, factual, normal and unchanging. To make itself interesting, it must put on the garb of abnormality and stimulate fiction. Sugar is ever sweet but a mere lump of sugar has little chance of finding purchasers when it could be available at the same price in a form more attractive and colourful.

3. THE GREAT NORMAL

Unfortunately for us, God, the underlying Intelligent Principle of the Universe, is the Great Normal. He is ever the same and does not admit of any novelty. He is the infinite normal background on which all abnormality appears for a time only to disappear for ever. There is nothing new about Him, for He is older than creation and is pure Being undifferentiated by the "new" things which come into and pass out of existence. There is no variety in Him that may attract us, for He knows no change and remains the same for ever, even when all created beings cease to be. There is not even a hump on His back to claim our attention for He is most uninterestingly homogeneous. The sun claims our attention by his brilliance in the sky, but God can boast of no place where from He may shine at us. He is quite the reverse of Euclid's point, for He has magnitude but no position. It is no surprise, therefore, that God, by His intrinsically essential normality, is unable to stimulate the curiosity of the ordinary man who is attracted only by the out of the way and the abnormal. Thus he remains unnoticed and nobody cares even to enquire whether He exists.

A goldsmith may make a very fine necklace from a small quantity of gold. If the gold is worth say rupees five hundred, he may charge another rupees five hundred for his workmanship. A rich man fond of ornaments may be prepared to pay even more to be able to enjoy the ownership of this trinket. To him the value of the necklace would lie not so much in the intrinsic worth of gold as in the exquisiteness of its workmanship. He is attracted only by the form of the necklace and is prepared to pay anything for it. If an equally beautiful necklace could be made out of coconut shell, his admiration for the workmanship will make him pay a fabulous sum for that also, even though the intrinsic worth of the coconut shell is practically nothing. Suppose that by some misfortune this rich connoisseur of art finds himself short of money and has to pawn these two exquisite necklaces to a pawnbroker, what will be the attitude of the latter? He will coolly refuse to accept the coconut shell necklace and will mercilessly weigh the one of gold, to assess its intrinsic worth as gold. The pawnbroker is concerned only with the substance and does not care a jot for all the fine workmanship on which the rich connoisseur had set such value.

The necklace is an artificial form of gold which can change, if broken or melted; the gold of which it is made ever remains gold and undergoes not even the slightest change under any circumstances. The form of all things is ever-temporary and evanescent, while the substance is permanent and lasting. If we fix our mind on the substance, there can never be disappointment or sorrow. But disappointment is inevitable and sorrow is bound to follow, if we set our mind upon particular forms. To ensure permanent escape from disappointment and sorrow, we must gradually minimise the values that we have been accustomed to attribute to the form side of the world and

finally realise, in all its fullness, the changeless and eternal value of its substance, which is nothing but God. The Hindu system of thought aims at such a weaning away of our attention from the form side of things, so that ultimately we may perceive the Divine Substance in all its truth and majesty. Everything that *is* exists only because of God who is Pure Being and without whom nothing can possibly *be*. Yet we do not perceive God but remain involved in forms just like the rich connoisseur who had his eyes only on the workmanship of the necklace and not on the material of which it is a mere form. Vēdānta wants us to adopt the mentality of the pawnbroker who has his eyes only on the intrinsic worth of the material.

4. THE FORM SIDE

A cloth is nothing but thread, a thread is nothing but cotton, cotton is nothing but matter, matter is nothing but Being and Being is nothing but God. Without God, there can be no being. Without being, there can be no matter; without matter, there can be no cotton; without cotton, there can be no thread; without thread, there can be no cloth. Each of them forms the substance or the material substratum of the immediately succeeding form, God being the ultimate Substance lending existence to and sustaining all. To find out that a cloth is all thread, it is certainly not necessary to tear it into shreds, nor is it necessary to smash a table to discover that it is wood. Similarly, it is not necessary at all to annihilate the form side of the world to be able to realise the underlying God-Substance. Forms may remain as they are; and the Seeker of Truth may utilise those forms in his ordinary life just as others do. Only they have no ultimate value for him. He may possess them or enjoy them, but will not be misled by them, for he would have his eye on the substance and not on the form. His

attitude towards them will be far different from that of others. Our being engrossed in the world-aspect prevents us from recognising the presence of God, even though we are all the time gazing at Him. Realisation of God in all the forms which make up the world makes the seeker of Truth ignore those forms. Such is the goal of the true Seeker, and the aim of Vēdānta is to help every one of us to reach that goal in gradual stages. To perceive the ever-present God is no doubt the ambition of all religions, but it is only the Vēdānta which explains why God, though omnipresent, is not perceived by us and it is Vēdānta alone that enunciates the method by which we can effectively overcome this imperceptibility and feel and realise His omnipresence in actual life.

5. TRUE PERCEPTION

In the foregoing lines we have referred particularly to the characteristic of Being (the Fountain of Life) which is inseparable from God. But that is not the only aspect of God, for He is also Intelligence (the Fountain of Light) and Bliss (the Fountain of Love). A perfect realisation of God-presence is the realisation of the Eternal Background of Life (*Sat*), Light (*Chit*) and Love (*Ānanda*) which gives substance to the multiplicity of appearances that attract us under the name of the world. The extent of our nearness to such perfect realisation can be gauged by the extent of the attraction which the world has for us, for the former is in inverse proportion to the latter. Even to enquire into the existence of God and to take an interest in such enquiry is ordinarily incompatible with the retention of interest in the world. As long as we allow ourselves to be attracted by the Abnormal Seeming, the Normal Substance can never interest us. The effort to interest ourselves more and more in the Normal,

which is God, has to proceed on parallel lines with the attempt to disinterest ourselves more and more in the Abnormal, known as the world. The Vēdānta system gives the name of *Abhyāsa* (Practice) to the former and the name of *Vairāgya* (Detachment) to the latter. These two correlated processes go on side by side, till they culminate in the full perception of the Normal and absolute extinction of the Abnormal, not by annihilation as some may fear, but by merging it in the basic substratum, the Normal Substance Itself. The aspirant who reaches such a state of perception is free (Mukta) for ever.

CHAPTER IV

THE LADDER OF REALISATION

1. THE DESCENT

As explained in previous chapters, the Vēdānta wants us to equate the world as well as the individual soul with God and this can be done only if we evaluate them by ceasing to attach any value to their form side. Before we consider in some detail the nature of such an equation, it will be useful to consider the need for it.

The need to go to another place arises from the fact that at present you are not there. Not only that; you want to go there because you are at present at a place where you do not want to remain. The need to sit arises from the fact that at present you are not sitting. Not only that; you want to sit because at present you are in a posture which is irksome. The need to know arises from the fact that at present you do not know. Not only that; you want to know because your present knowledge has turned out to be misconceived. Thus, generally the need to do something arises when at present you are not doing that thing, but are doing something else which is inconsistent with that thing and therefore undesirable. Similarly, the need to equate the world and the individual soul with God arises from the fact that at present we are not doing so. Not only that;

we are equating them with certain other things and we feel that such a misconceived equation is undesirable.

The negative *non*-equating with God is called by the Vēdāntī *Āvarana* (Screening) or *Ajñāna* (Non-perception). The positive mis-equating with something else is called *Vikshēpa* (Distraction) or *Ārōpa* (Super-imposition). The irksomeness that we experience by reason of our mistakes, both negative and positive, is given the name of *Mala* (Dirt). These three, namely: non-equating with God, mis-equating with something else and the consequent trouble, form a series of successive descending steps, as it were, from God to the world or to the individual soul.

2. THE ASCENT

As Śrī Śankarāchārya pertinently points out, a person who descends a flight of steps does not ascend them in the *same* order, but only in the reverse order. He, therefore, says that the Dirt has to be first gradually and steadily minimised, Distraction then slowly and surely got rid of, then Non-perception overcome and then, finally, the great equation realised. The Dirt is reduced by the process known as *Karma* (Action), Distraction is eliminated by the process called *Bhakti* (Devotion), Non-perception is dissipated by *Jñāna* (Knowledge) and the resultant realisation of the equation for ever more is given the name of Mōksha (Freedom). Such are the steps in the ladder of ascent towards God.

Some people are of the opinion that Right Action alone is needed to attain salvation. Some others think that Devotion by itself is enough. Some others feel that knowledge without action or devotion can lead to the goal. The Advaitī, however, emphasises equally the necessity and importance of every one of these processes and points out that they are not distinct paths to salvation, but that all

of them form a single and the only path. Each is as important as the other, for none of them is really effective enough to be able to take us on to our goal, without the help of the others. The Advaitī's method of exposition, therefore, is not confined to the nature and the function of knowledge, like that of certain abstract philosophical systems, nor to the details and the efficacy of Action, like those of certain ritualistic creeds, nor to the method of worship and the ecstatic enjoyment which devotional faiths are content to deal with. His is a wider and a more comprehensive system; in fact, a synthesis which holds together, explains, and justifies all other systems.

3. A COMMON MISTAKE

It is impossible to jump up from the lowest rung of a ladder to the highest. If we attempt to do so we shall not only not reach the highest rung, but may lose foothold even of the rung on which we are at present. It is no doubt true that a ladder is of no use to the one who has ascended all its rungs and has secured a strong foothold on the terrace above, but he will be a foolish man who attempts to discard it when he is just trying to ascend or stands on any rung, be it ever so high, short of the terrace itself. Simply because a man has managed to ascend four rungs and stepped on the fifth, he should not attempt to saw away the portion of the ladder which is below him and which he has already ascended. If he is so foolish as to do this, he will fall down to the floor and may be seriously injured. The downfall of many a Jñāna Yōgī in modern times is mainly attributable to his wanton and foolish neglect of Action and Devotion, which he considers beneath himself.

As already pointed out, Action, Devotion and Knowledge form the rungs of one and the same ladder and it will be foolish to do away with them piecemeal. As long as

there is embodiment, Action is bound to be, so says Lord Śrī Krishna (Gītā XVIII—11). As long as there is dependence, howsoever slight, Devotion has to be. As long as we do not realise and feel and enjoy the presence of God in and around us, the practice of Jñāna is a necessity. When the perfect equation of the aspirant's soul with God is realised in its fullest significance, there remains no need for any further practice in Jñāna. When the soul is equated with the Supreme Being, there can possibly be no feeling of the slightest dependence, and devotion has no further purpose to serve. When the soul is equated with the Formless Absolute, the seeming embodiment ceases to have any relationship with it and can no more involve it in any responsible Action. Till such a state of realisation is reached, the entire ladder must remain and must be used, as necessity may arise. After that state is reached, the aspirant, who has now ceased to be an aspirant, will be immersed, as it were, in the realisation of his True Self. As the very need for any effort has ceased for him, he will make no effort for retaining the ladder nor will he make any effort to kick it off. A sleeping child makes no effort to hold tight the apple in its hand; nor does it make any effort to throw it away. The child simply forgets it. Holding the apple in its hand or allowing it to slip away is not any responsible action of the child, but is the result of habit or of reflex action of the inert physical frame. Even such is the real state of the true Knower of the Self.

4. TRUTH AND FALSEHOOD

Let us begin then from the lowest step, the need to eliminate Dirt by gradually minimising it. It has been mentioned before that Dirt is the gross effect of mis-equating the world or the individual soul with what it is not. The varieties of Dirt, therefore, are proportionate to the varieties of

mis-equating.

That two and two make four is a *true* statement. It is true for all time, at all places and under all circumstances and it is impossible to conceive of a variation in it. This statement therefore is always one and one only. That two and two do not make four is a statement merely *negativing the truth.* Negation, by virtue of its being a negation only, cannot admit of any varieties. The negative statement is also, therefore, one and only one. That two and two make five is a *false* statement, which not only negatives the truth but positively puts forward a proposition which is opposed to truth. The number of false statements depends upon the number of the figures which two and two do not make. Two and two make six, two and two make three, two and two make twenty and so on. As the numerals other than the right number four are infinite, the number of false statements which one can make as regards the sum of two and two is also infinite.

Similarly, the statement that the world or the soul is God is a true statement and does not admit of any variation and is always one and one only. The negative statement that the world or the soul is not God is not a true one and this also does not admit of any variation and is alway one. But the statement that the world or the soul is this or that (meaning something which is taken to be distinct and different from God) admits of infinite variations, corresponding to the infinite number of things which we ordinarily consider to be not God. In short, Truth is over one, but Falsehood is infinite in its varieties; and the consequences of such falsehood are also infinite. In the rope-snake illustration, "It is a *Rope*" is a true statement, true for all time and incapable of any alternative or variation. "It is not a *Rope*" is a mere negative statement equally incapable of any alternativive or variation, even though it is the result of the

primary mistake of non-perceiving. "It is a *Snake*" is a false statement and capable of infinite alternatives or variations like "It is a cleft in the ground", "It is a stick", etc. Such false statements are the result of the secondary mistake of super-imposition, which may have for its object infinite number of things other than the rope. One who thinks it is a snake may be afraid; another who mistakes it for a cleft may leap over it; the third who takes it for a stick may stoop down to pick it up, and so on. It is impossible to enumerate what all consequences may flow from such mistaken super-impositions, for they also are infinite.

5. THE MIS-EQUATION

Dirt then is of infinite variety, corresponding to the infinite variety in mis-equating the world or the soul. To understand, therefore, the nature of Dirt and the methods prescribed for getting rid of it, it will be necessary to understand beforehand the nature and the varieties of that mis-equating. But the reader, who has carefully followed the argument so far, may ask us: "You have mentioned till now only three things, God, the World and the Soul, and every thing conceivable comes under these categories. You say that the world is God, and that the soul is God, thereby granting that these two equations are right and proper. Nobody with the slightest sense in him ever equates the world with the soul. These are the only possible equations and mis-equations. The equations are correct and the mis-equation is never done at all. Where from then do you get any mis-equation, much less any variety in it?" We shall have occasion later on to show that it is not correct to say that nobody ever equates the world with the soul. On the other hand, all of us, including the highest intellectuals, equate ourselves with the world every moment of our lives. Let us recall to the mind the example of gold necklace.

"The necklace is gold" is a true statement. "Gold is bright" is an equally true statement. But "The necklace is bright" is a false statement for the word "necklace" is not synonymous with the word "gold", but is used only to signify a *form* given to gold for the present. Brightness belongs only to the gold for it will be present in the same way whereever gold is; it does not belong to the necklace, for it will not be present in the same way in the necklace made of coconut shell or of any other material. Similarly, though the statement "The necklace is gold" is true, the statement "Gold hurts my neck" is false, as it is only the necklace that can hurt and not gold, for if hurting were a property of gold it would hurt in whatever shape it was worn. The fact is that any other material worked into the shape of the necklace would equally hurt. The hurting, therefore, is due to the form and not due to the substance. Thus, sometimes we attribute to the form the properties, e.g. brightness, which belong only to the substance and at other times we attribute to the *substance* the properties, e.g. hurting, which belong only to the form. This mistaken attribution, which may be one-sided or mutual, is knhwn in Vēdāntā phraseology as *Adhyāsa.*

"The World is God" is true; "God is ever existent, conscious and blissful" is also equally correct. But the propositiyn "The world is ever-existent, conscious and blissful" is dangerously false. Euclid's proposition that things which ere equal to the same thing are equal to each other eyidently does not seem to apply here. A chain is gold; a ring is gold; but a chain is *not* a ring· In spite of this, however, the universal truth of Euclid's proposition is not in any way impaired. On the other hand, as we shall see later, it supports and is supported by the principles enunciated by the Advaitī in the course of his treatment of an equation, as it has to be understood.

CHAPTER V

PROPER GUIDANCE

1. SUBSTANCE AND FORM

A gold ring is made up of the substance gold and the form as ring. When *Adhyāsa* begins to play, a confusion is caused and the attributes which really belong to either of these factors are conceived of as the attributes of the other. As gold permeates and sustains the gold ring, every property of gold must necessarily be found in the gold ring, but the name and the form of ring are specialities of the ring alone and do not belong to gold. Simply because the gold substance and the ring form combined together now form the object of a single conception as the gold ring, it does not mean that we are entitled to give the gold substance or the ring form any property which does not belong to them individually.

However in ordinary life we do not bear this distinction in mind and such neglect of clear perception, as applied generally to the world, is responsible for all our troubles. It is the aim of Vēdānta to bring home to us this distinction, even when we are engaged in matters worldly. It is this perception of distinction between the substance and the form that is known by the name of *Vivēka* (Discrimination).

It is impossible to attain perfect *Vivēka*, which is not far removed from true knowledge itself, at once or in a single effort. We are seriously handicapped by the fact that we have not only not seen, but it is impossible to see the substance gold without some form or other. We are, on the other hand, accustomed to seeing only forms and to associate certain attributes with them. It will be, for instance, a sudden violation of our habitual thinking, if we are asked to transfer to gold all the attributes which we have so far associated with its forms or vice versa. Vēdānta being an eminently practical system of spiritual training recognises that force of habit is a common human failing and, therefore, it does not attempt the futile task of asking us to do the impracticable. Vēdānta enunciates a series of steps which will take us steadily on to the final realisation, without seriously violating our pre-conceived notions, false though they may be.

2. VIRTUE AND VICE

If we get happiness of any sort from any object, it is due to the fact that that object owes its existence to and is permeated by the God Substance whose essential nature is Bliss. But we have been accustomed to look upon that object itself as responsible for the happiness, without recognising or giving a moment's thought to the underlying Bliss-Substance, namely God. What is sweet in the pudding is really only sugar, but we ignore its existence and say that the pudding is sweet. It is the sweetness in the pudding that attracts us. The boy who has learned to associate sweetness with the pudding and wants the pudding will never be satisfied if you ofter him a lump of sugar, telling him that it is the sugar that gives sweetness to the pudding. Satisfaction results when only the thing that is wanted is given, and not when any other thing is offered in its place,

even if it be superior. Similarly, when we are accustomed to feel happy in the possession of a particular object, there is no use offering us, instead, the Bliss of God Himself, for want is always fulfilled only by the thing wanted. It is, therefore, the height of folly and impracticability if any body should expect us to turn away from the world, which has been hitherto, and still is, attracting us, and to turn towards God all on a sudden simply because of his preaching about the evanescent nature of earthly joys and the permanent glory of God. The attitude of practical guides has to be like this. If a boy wants pudding, don't tell him that the pudding is not sweet in itself, that it is sugar that makes it sweet and that he must give up the desire to have pudding and take instead a lump of sugar. He will refuse to listen to you; he will throw away the lump of sugar as not wanted and feel miserably disappointed at your inability to satisfy him. Therefore, do give him the pudding, see that it is made of healthy flour, that it is properly cooked and that the boy does not take more than what is good for him. That is, accept his desire as a basic fact, which is not to be disturbed, but give him better and healthier stuff in the least harmful manner.

Wealth becomes an object of desire by mis-equating it with happiness. One person strives hard to obtain it by adopting some unfair method, actually obtains it, but ultimately finds himsef condemned to jail. Another persons adopts a different method; he also becomes rich and earns the respect of the people around him. The mis-equation is equally present in both these persons; but one of them lands himself in misery and the other in pleasure, only owing to the difference in the methods adopted for fulfilling the desire for wealth, which in both of them arises out of the mis-equation. As we have defined Dirt as the gross effect of

mis-equation, we may say that the adoption of a fair method in pursuit of that mis-equation ends in creating a Dirt which is less harmful, whereas the adoption of an unfair method heaps on us positively harmful Dirt. The Dirt is less harmful, from ultimate standards, when it gives us pleasure and peace; it is grieviously harmful when it gives us pain and unrest. The former is called *Sukha* (Happiness) and the latter *Duhkha* (Misery). The fair and healthy method of activity that gives us the desired object in a healthy form and with the least harm is called *Punya* (Virtue); the unfair and unhealthy method of activity that aims at the securing (but may very often fail to secure) the desired object and does us serious harm is called *Pāpa* (Sin).

In the first stages of the guidance of the earnest seeker, the Vēdic system of practical religious training does not in the least seek to disturb the initial mis-equation, or to discourage the desire arising from it, or even to discourage the activity adopted in furtherance of that desire. It accepts the basic mis-equation as a settled fact for the present, tells us which all desires are fair and healthy and feasible of satisfaction, and prescribes for us such activities as are the least harmful and most competent to lead us to the satisfaction of such healthy desires. At the same time, it also tells us what desires are unhealthy and incapable of satisfaction and what activities are harmful and will land us in misery. The former set of activities which are *Punya* (Virtuous) and lead us to *Sukha* (Happiness) are given the name of *Dharma* (Right Conduct); the latter set of activities which are *Pāpa* (Sinful) and lead us to *Duhkha* (Misery), are given the name of *Adharma* (Wrong Conduct). The first function of any religion is to define and enunciate the *Dharma* to be followed and also to define and enunciate the *Adharma* to be avoided.

3. PROPER GUIDES

But strangely enough, the human capacity for mis-equating is so wide and so potent in its scope that most often the right activities appear to us to be wrong and vice versa. Only the person who is beyond all possibility of any kind of mis-equation is competent to tell us what is Right and what is Wrong. And such a Person is God who is always above error, or may be a Sage who has transcended all error and has realised his oneness with God. Who can confidently tell us that a particular path leads to a particular place? Certainly he who laid the path himself and also he who from a great height sees clearly the path as well as the destination simultaneously, and so also he who has trodden the path and reached the destination. Similarly, we can get right knowledge of the path of Dharma from God Himself, who laid it down for the guidance of His creatures and who also directly perceives the path as well as the goal. We can get such knowledge also from those who, with implicit faith in the Word of God, trod the arduous path and reached the goal, though at one time they were also like ourselves. The Hindus believe that the direct teachings of the Path-Maker God are the Vēdas or Śruti and that the teachings of the Sages are the Dharma Śāstras or Smṛiti. These, with the subsidiary literature written to elucidate, amplify or illustrate them, form the sacred literature of the Hindus.

4. A FUTILE REVOLT

The deep faith of the true Hindu in the capacity of this sacred literature to guide him rightly is not a thing to be treated lightly, unless you are able to prove that this faith is mistaken and unless you offer a more competent substitute and also prove your credentials to offer such a substitute. In fact objections have been raised and substi-

tutes offered during recent times, but not one of them is such as had not already been effectively dealt with by our ancient thinkers. Reason and experience have always confirmed and never contradicted the teachings of our sacred literature. It is idle to abuse it. It is as useless as to abuse the law of gravitation, when you happen to roll down a flight of steps because of a slip of your own foot. You may burn all the books which tell you about Dharma, but it will continue to be as good as ever before, and rule and guide the universe undisturbed by your foolishness. By destroying books on gravitation, you can not destroy the law of gravitation; you will, on the other hand, only deprive yourself of the knowledge of its working and of the opportunity of utilising it in many ways for your own betterment. The loss is only yours, for *your* knowledge of the law and its working depends on those books; the law certainly does not depend for its existence upon them. Those who get their fingers burnt may as well resolve on amending all the scientific books by interpolating a sentence in them that fire shall not burn, but they can not make fire incapable of burning. To the true Hindu his Dharma is true, not because somebody has said it is so, nor because it is recorded in such and such a book, but only because it is Truth itself. It does not depend for its validity upon the military strength of its adherents, the intellectual acumen of its exponents, the increasing number of those who profess allegiance to it, or any other extraneous circumstance. It is not a matter for the majority of any set of voters to decide whether fire shall or shall not burn. Fire does not depend for its validity or operation upon the approval or disapproval of anybody else, howsoever great he may think himself to be. The Hindu Dharma therefore claims to be *Sanātana*, Eternal, True for all time, irrespective of the fact whether the whole world owes allegiance to it or whether there is not a single

soul in the world who cares to be guided by it. Those who break away from it or withdraw themselves from its influence really do harm only to themselves.

5. THE IMMUTABLE LAW

As we have pointed out before, truth is always one. If there were varieties in it, we could try to dilute it or alter it to suit the circumstances but, unfortunately for the modern tinkerers of Dharma, truth does not admit of variation and the slightest variation from it will land us only in falsehood. There can be no compromise in matters of truth. Truth is not, like politics, a matter of expediency and adjustment. If Dharma descended to that level, it would cease to be truth and would forfeit all claims to our allegiance. As characteristically put in Sanskrit phraseology, the Divine Law is *Śāstra* "that which rules", and not *Śāsya*, "that which can be ruled in, ruled out or ruled round about" at our will and pleasure. Dharma is inviolable and immutable. Even Lord Śrī Krishna, who is believed to be God Incarnate, does not assert that what He says or does is Dharma, but refers us to the Śāstras to find out what has to be done and what has to be avoided (Gītā XVI, 24). How can an act be Adharma if I approve of it and how can another act be Dharma if I disapprove of it? — are questions possible only in this Kali Age when misequation is the rule of the day in every sphere of life or thought. Happily for us, the darkest night is not without its gleams of light from the eternal stars above, and even if they are screened from us by thick clouds, we will find somehow a tiny torch to light our path and guide our footsteps onwards, if only we are earnest in moving forward, while others are content to brood over the enveloping darkness and find in it a convenient excuse for their own laziness.

CHAPTER VI

DESIRE AND ACTION

1. TWOFOLD ACTION

We have mentioned before that Dirt is of two kinds. The good Dirt, known as *Punya* (Virtue), is caused by *Dharma* (Right conduct) and leads to *Sukha* (Happiness). The bad Dirt, known as *Pāpa* (sin), is caused by *Adharma* (Wrong conduct) and leads to *Duhkha* (Misery). We have also said that it is only the Śāstras that can guide us rightly in such matters. The Śāstras also tell us that as Dirt cannot be completely avoided as long as there is the antecedent mis-equation, we must try to minimise the bad Dirt as much as possible and, at the same time, increase the good Dirt as far as possible, for the former has the tendency to deepen our ignorance, while the latter opens the door for acquiring knowledge, if we are so inclined. This conditional clause has been advisedly introduced because there are two types of men who strive for the accumulation of good Dirt. One of them, when he sees happiness before him, say in the form of wealth, feels so attracted to it that he decides to do more Dharma for increasing it, as he believes that the present store of wealth will be exhausted as soon as its causal Punya works itself out. The other one realises, on the other hand, that after

all his troubles in the performance of Dharma he has secured a happiness, which is necessarily ephemeral and bound to disappear sooner or later. He desires to put an end to the eternal round of happiness and action, action and happiness and so on. Such a realisation naturally leads him to enquire if there is a happiness which is eternal and is not caused by action and if there are any means by which he can attain such a happiness. Dharma, which is the cause of good Dirt, has therefore a double object, the increasing of ephemeral happiness and the realisation of its ephemeralness. When only the former aspect is kept in view, the Dharma gets the name of *Sakāma Karma* (Desireful Action). When the latter aspect is given predominance, the same Dharma becomes *Nishkāma Karma* (Desireless Action). The difference lies in the mental attitudes of the two types of men and not in their outward actions. The bad Dirt, caused by *Pāpa* (*sin*), can be compared to rough stone walls of a prison, against which the prisoner knocks his head in misery and impotent rage. The good Dirt, caused by *Sakāma Karma*, may be compared to the painted walls of a furnished bungalow in which some prominent political prisoners are allowed to pass the period of their captivity in comparative ease. Both are prisons, though one of them is uncomfortable and the other quite comfortable. Both of them shut out the prisoners effectively from the wide world beyond the walls.

2. PURIFICATION OF THE MIND

The good Dirt caused by *Nishkāma Karma*, however, not only shares the advantages of the *Sakāma Karma*, but is of so refined a nature that it screens rather than imprisons. And its screening capacity may be compared to that of transparent glass walls through which one can have a view of the world outside and have the extra pleasure which such

a view can give. It also leads to an intensification of one's longing to be free, in spite of the many attractive things which may be provided within the four walls of the prison-bungalow. The more the aspirant is intent on eschewing desire from his actions, the more transparent become the walls of his prison. This transparency which is really the transparency of the mind-enclosure is known as *Chitta Śuddhi*, purification of the mind. The mind so purified, free as it is from the clutches of desire for sensual pleasures and able as it is to withstand their attractions, will look beyond towards the goal of freedom. The aspirant will long to know and to enjoy what is beyond the limitations of the mind. Purification of the mind will immediately lead him on to *Jijñāsa*, the longing for and the effort to realise the truth, and will gradually qualify him for such a realisation.

Thus in the sphere of Action there are four distinct stages (1) Misguided Action to secure satisfaction of desire, (2) Action to prevent being misguided or to palliate and nullify the effects of previous misguided Action, (3) Regulated Action to secure satisfaction of desire, (4) Regulated Action aiming at the purification of the mind.

3. REFINING OF DESIRE

As the world of Name and Form is permeated by the ever existent God, we mistakenly transfer His eternal existence to Name and Form. We forget that existence is an attribute of God alone and not of Name and Form which go by the name of the world, just as we forget that brightness is an attribute of gold alone and not of the shape which goes by the name of a necklace or a ring. A man who thinks himself rich on possession of a few thousand rupees will feel that he is poor only when he learns of persons who possess lakhs. It is usually said that discontent

is a sign of progress, but the discontent which is not potent enough to lead to emulation is really a sign of retrogression. It is true that the emulating individual is not content with what he has, but at the same time he is not discontented in the sense that he would throw away what he possesses. Religion inspires us with hopes of better things. It does not merely point out to us the ephemeral nature of the things which we have or desire to have and thus land us in pessimism, but also tells us of more lasting things which we can have, if only we exert ourselves properly. If you are weak or sickly, religion tells you that by appropriate effort you can go to a region where you can get a body which is healthy, strong and ever youthful. If the flowers in your garden fade, you are told of a garden where flowers are ever in bloom and never fade; and you are shown the way to that blessed region. One would ask if such regions are capable of lasting for ever. The answer is an emphatic No. The only thing that lasts for ever is God. From a tiny thing which appears and disappears in the twinkling of an eye to the biggest and mightiest, short of God Himself, which lasts for aeons and aeons of time, there are infinite grades of lastingness. It is God alone that lends lastingness to them. But it is impossible to attain this knowledge all at once. Therefore the Śāstra offers us a course of gradual progress. First it draws away our attention from things immediately close to us by presenting before us a more lasting thing of the same sort. It says, "you are equating lastingness with the thing before you; here is another thing with which you will be more justified in equating lastingness". Accordingly when you discard the first equation and take up the second, it tells you "Here is a third thing which is more worthy of being equated with lastingness". This process is repeated indefinitely till the aspirant realises that all things obtained by effort must have

an end, sooner or later, and he turns his attention to God, the only everlasting thing.

We call the world and the things in it bright and pleasant by transferring to them the attributes of luminosity and joy, which belong only to God. Everything shines only because it is permeated by the eternal effulgence of God. Everything which gives us pleasure is able to do so only because it has its existence in God the fountain-head of bliss. As in the case of lastingness, there are infinite grades of pleasure. The Śāstra takes us by the hand and leads us step by step from the lower grade to the higher one, from there to a still higher one, and so on, till we realise that the brightness and the pleasantness of all objects other than God are only relative, shortlived and mixed with varying degrees of darkness and unpleasantness. We then turn our attention to God, the only one whose brightness and pleasantness are absolute and everlasting.

4. A PARALLEL PROCESS

Adhyāsa considered the other way about makes us attribute to God the characteristics of the World. We begin to say that God, the eternally existing Reality, is "the noblest creation of Man". If by chance we grant His existence, we sometimes call Him blind, though He is the eternally conscious and in fact the only conscious Reality. If, by chance again, we are prepared to concede to Him existence and wakefulness, we proceed to characterise Him, that fountain-head of love and bliss, as cruel and merciless. Here also we have to be gradually led to believe and to realise that God does exist, that He never sleeps and that He is the Source of all our joys. The process is a very slow one, for the mis-conception is so deep-rooted in us that it is impossible to do away with it at once. But the reader will have noted that the decrease in the sense of lastingness

of the world and of its attractions is necessarily proportionate to the increase in the sense of the lastingness of God and that the same principle applies to the other aspects also. If the darkness in a room is getting less, the light is bound to get brighter. The decrease in darkness and the increase in light are two parallel processes which need but a single effort to produce. Similarly, when the mis-equation of lastingness etc. with the world gets less and less, the proper equation of those characteristics with God will begin to be felt and realised more and more. The culmination is reached when God is realised as the only existing Reality, the only conscious Entity and the only Thing of Bliss. At that stage, the world as such ceases to have any existence of its own. A thing which can not boast of even existence, cannot certainly claim for itself any element of consciousness or of bliss. Here again we think it may be necessary to remind the reader that, to realise that a gold ring is gold, it is not at all necessary to melt it. To the seer of the God Substance, the world of Name and Form does not cease to exist, shine or please, as some people misrepresent the Advaita doctrine to mean. The seer realises that it exists, shines and pleases only because it has for its substratum the God Substance whose essential nature is *Sat*, *Chit* and *Ānanda* (Existence, Consciousness and Bliss).

5. DHARMA SUPREME

As this mis-equating (Positive Avidyā) leads on to Desire (Kāma), which makes us engage in Action (Karma), good or bad, resulting in Dirt (Mala), good or bad, and as these are the ordinary incidents of our everyday life in the world, the Sacred Literature which deals with these is necessarily extensive and varied. It shines with vivid descriptions of the glory of good actions and the good things with which such actions are rewarded. It also terrifies us

with lurid descriptions of the folly of bad actions and of misery that follows in their wake. The immediate objective of such sacred literature is to wean us away from Adharma, which thickens the screen between us and truth, and to induce us to take up Dharma as the path that leads to spiritual progress. A man whose hand has become dirty by coming in contact with oil is asked to use soap to get rid of that dirt. Is not the soap itself a kind of dirt? Certainly it is. He makes his hand dirty with the soap suds, but he has to do so to clean his hand of the dirty oil. The soap is good dirt and the oil is bad dirt. When the oil has been completely washed away, there will be no further need for the soap also. After the oil and the consequent discomfort have both gone, nobody is foolish enough to dip his hand in the soap water simply for the purpose of covering it with lather. Thus according to the Hindu system there is no intermediate stage at which an aspirant can be above the need of practising Dharma. He can transcend Dharma only when he has transcended the need for any kind of effort, for he will then have reached the goal of all effort. It may be pointed out in this context that transcendence of Dharma cannot mean a licence to do Adharma for Adharma has been left far behind even in the preliminary stages. If we find anybody doing Adharma claiming to have risen above Dharma, we may be quite sure that he has not only not risen above Dharma but has not risen even above Adharma.

CHAPTER VII

REGULATION OF DUTIES

1. NEED FOR ENQUIRY

Now we pass on to mis-equations relating to the Individual Soul. We have first to answer questions like these: Is not the Individual Soul my Self? How can there be any mis-equation about it? I may mistake a rope for a snake or a pillar for a thief, but is it conceivable that I can ever mistake myself for something else or mistake some other thing for myself? Even the worst lunatic among men never thinks that he is a pillar or that the pillar is himself. Where is then the need for any enquiry in the matter with a view to disperse a mis-equation that does not exist? It is as meaningless as the statement: "My twin brother and myself were so much alike that I am still in doubt whether it was he or myself that fell into the river and was drowned". The Vedānta however, leaving aside all delicacy in the matter of proclaiming the truth, asserts emphatically: "You are really worse than the worst of lunatics for you do think yourself to be a pillar and you do mistake the pillar for yourself". We may resent this statement and may abuse the Vēdānta for such an accusation, but it is a relentless truth.

2. THE UBIQUITOUS I

Every moment of our lives we are using expressions like: *I walk, I sit, I see, I hear, I am hungry, I desire, I think,* and so on. Even the greatest of philosophers able to soar

to the dizzy heights of speculative thought and the greatest of poets revelling in the lofty regions of imagination have to use and they do use these expressions, when need arises to use them. When the words walking, sitting, etc. are used in apposition with the word *I*, the *I* must necessarily be capable of the functions or activities denoted by these various verbs. The *I* in "I walk" is capable of walking; the *I* in "I sit" is capable of sitting; the *I* in "I see" is capable of seeing; and so on. It is a patent fact that it is the legs that walk, it is the eye that sees. Now the I in the sentence "I walk" means the walking legs. We can not substitute this I in the sentence "I see", for the sentence would mean "the walking leg sees". This will be absurd. We shall therefore have to concede that the word *I* has a limited and a special meaning in each one of the sentences. In other words, it is not used in the same sense in all the sentences. We realise from the various functions of all these different verbs that the real *I* is not restricted by any of the functions mentioned and that its potentiality for action is not confined to or limited by these few verbs only. A simple illustration will make this point very clear. Suppose you go to a distant village in search of an old classmate of yours, whom you have not seen for a long time. When you enter the village; you happen to see him in front of the first house in the street. He greets you kindly and asks you to sit down. You ask him if that is his house. He says, Yes. You leave your things with him and go to the river to have a bath. On your return you find him sitting in front of another house. You ask him if that also is his house. He says, Yes. You chat with him for a few more minutes and then desire to pay a visit to the temple. You do so and on returning find him seated in a third house which also he says is his. You are pleasantly surprised now to learn that he has grown rich enough to own three houses,

but as you desire to have a complete idea of his wealth, you ask him "Do you own any more houses in the village?" He coolly replies "Certainly. All the houses in the village are mine, for I move freely in all of them". It is only then that you realise that your old friend has really no house at all to call his own. Similarly, who is it that walks? It is *I*. Who is it that sits? It is *I*. Who is it that sees? It is *I*. Who is it that thinks? It is *I*. Who is it that sleeps? It is *I*. This unusual claim of *I* to do everything is on a par with the claim of that friend to all the houses in the village. The *I* is really a pauper and is essentially unassociated with walking, sitting, seeing etc. which are really the different functions of the body, the senses and the mind. In fact we are all the time mis-equating the *I* with the leg, the eye, and so on.

3. THE SUBSIDIARY EQUATIONS

When you say "*I* walk", you virtually put yourself in the same *category* as walking things viz, the legs. When you say "I am *lame*" you assume for yourself the *quality* which really belongs to your legs. When you say "I *walk*", you are arrogating to yourself the *function* properly belonging to the legs. When you say again "This is *my shoe*". you are usurping the possession which in actual fact is vested only in the foot. Similarly when you see, hear, think etc.

Generalising from these observed phenomena, we can say that wherever there is an equating of the *I* with something else, it assumes to itself also the Category (*Jāti*), *Quality* (*Guna*), Function (*Kriyā*) and Relationship (*Sambandha*) of that something else, besides calling itself very often by the very Name (Samjñā) of that other thing.

The following example will clarify these mis-equations. *I* am a Brāhmana when I equate myself with the body, for *it* belongs to that caste category (Jāti). *I* am tall for so *it*

is (Guna). I write, for *it* does so (Kriyā). I am so and so's son, for *it* is so (Sambandha). I respond to the name of Krishna, for that is the name given to *it* (Samjñā). Confining ourselves for the present to the single equating of myself with the body, we may note that I am opening thereby the door wide to all sorts of other subsidiary equations. By accepting for myself the category of the body, I at once become a member of all the conceivable *categories* under which it can come, e.g., I am a householder, I am an Indian, I am a man, I am an animate being, I am an object, and so on. I take upon myself all the *qualities* also of the body, e.g. I am tall, I am lean, I am sickly, I am fair, and so on. Similarly, I make myself responsible for the *activities* of the body, e.g., I write, I talk, I walk, I ride, and so on. I have to accord also *kinship* to all who are related to it, e.g. I am the son of so and so, I am the father of so and so, I am the husband of so and so, and so on. The *I* has to respond to all the *names*, however fanciful or destorted they may be, which other people have learnt to associate with the body.

It is impossible to enumerate all the categories under which the body can be classified. The number of qualities belonging to it is infinite; its relatedness is as varied as there are things in the world; its possibilities of functioning are also unlimited; and there can be no limits to naming it as anybody likes. It will thus be seen that the subsidiary equations which are the immediate results of the primary equation with the body are infinite both in number and in variety.

4. FUNCTION OF THE ŚĀSTRAS

The Dharma Śāstras do not in the least attempt to distrub the equations. They simply ask "Who are you?" If you answer "I am a Brāhmana", they say "Glad to hear

it. Brāhmanyam is really a matter to be greatly proud of. But have you considered how you can retain it or improve it or how you may lose it or reduce it? If you care, we may tell you how you can use your Brāhmanyam effectively and turn it to such account that you can become even a Dēva". Thus the Śāstras point out to you the duties and the ideals of a Brāhmana. If you say "I am a father", they immediately present to you a list of your responsibilities and duties as a father. If you say "I am a citizen", there is another set of obligations ready-made for you by the Śāstras. Similarly, whatever you say you are, the Śāstras do not quarrel with you or tell you that you are wrongly equating yourself with something you are not, but proceed to prescribe for you a set of duties and responsibilities appropriate to the category with which you identify yourself. Such categories being numberless the duties and responsibilities which the Śāstras prescribe for us are also necessarily numberless. No wonder, therefore, that the Śāstras and the treatises explaining and illustrating them are so vast and various. Your duties as a son are very different from your duties as a brother. Frequently there may be a clash between your duties as a son and as a brother and you may be in a fix to decide what exactly you have to do. And it is more to guide you in such difficulties than to explain the Dharma Śāstras that the several Purānas and Itihāsas like the Rāmāyana and the Mahābhārata are intended. They present to us ideals of conduct adopted by men who are quite human in their weaknesses also and yet are able to tide over the vicissitudes of life by their steadfast hold on Dharma. We the moderns by our lack of faith in the Śāstras are gradually but steadily losing our hold on Dharma. The result is confusion and chaos, an assertion of rights without a recognition of the corresponding duties, an insistence on privileges without reference to

the corresponding responsibilities, and so on, which end in disturbing the peace of not only the society and the home but of the individual himself. When the husband and the son claim the mastery in you at one and the same time and you are unable to decide your course of action, you may offend both your wife and your mother in the futile attempt to please both. This cannot happen if you seek the guidance of the Śāstras and follow them faithfully. A feeling of safety, peace and strength arises in the individual, as also in a nation, if Dharma, the unerring standard of Right, acts as the guide. If, on the other hand, the inviolable Dharma is ignored, discarded and flouted, whether individually or collectively, there is bound to be confusion in all walks of life. The only way to restore peace to an individual or a nation is to reinstate Dharma on its throne of authority, pay homage to it and obey its dictates.

5. LAW ORDINARY AND SPECIAL

It is patently necessary that the Dharma be of various kinds to suit the nature and the intensity of the false equation which each individual makes. The Dharma Śāstras are intended for the guidance of human beings only. They cannot possibly have any educative value for individuals who though born human are content to behave as inanimate matter or like animals. They may have the form of human beings but are no better than brutes or automatons. They are usually content with merely carrying out the will of those who are more powerful than they or they spend their lives solely in the pursuit of sex and hunger, the only two things which move the animal to action. Even the best of us sometimes descend to that level and it is our duty to be ever reminding ourselves of our status as human beings. This can be done only if we constantly keep before our mind's eye the vast gulf that separates Man from the

brute and the vaster gulf that lies between man and the inert matter. To justify and maintain our status as a human being, the "thinking animal", with an erect backbone, capable of distinguishing the right from the wrong, the Sāstras prescribe a series of Dharmas which mostly consist of negative injunctions. These Don'ts, like *Don't steal*, *Don't lie*, *Don't covet*, *Don't commit adultery*, *Don't injure*, and so on exaust the "religious precepts" of most religions. In some religions they are called "moral precepts", as distinguished from other precepts, peculiar to them. In the Hindu system of thought, *all* injunctions, positive and negative, which are common to and govern the conduct of all human beings whoever, whenever and wherever they may be, are classed together as *Sāmānya Dharma*, Ordinary Law.

To those who are not content with merely calling themselves human beings and believe that they belong to a well defined and definite class (*varṇa*), and are in an equally well-defined and definite stage (*Āśrama*) of progress, the Sāmānya Dharma, common to all mankind, is not enough, for their aim is not the perpetuation of their human-ness, but the transcending of it by gradual steps. Such well-defined and definite classes and stages are found preserved only in the Hindu Dharma. In other religions some classes and stages may seem to correspond to those in the Hindu religion, but none of them are well defined or definite. They are ever subject to fluctuation and alteration. The Hindu religion is the only one which permits of special rules relating to Varṇas and Āśramas. These special rules which apply to and govern the Hindu community collectively go by the name of *Viśēsha Dharma*, Special Law.

Both these kinds of Dharma, Sāmānya and Viśēsha, whatever be their relative importance, are based on our

sense of human-ness, that is, on our equating with ourselves the human-ness of the physical bodies which we are inhabiting. All Dharma, therefore, is prescribed only on accepting as a basic fact the equation between the soul and the physical body. When this equation is cut asunder by the realisation of the true equation between the Soul and God, Dharma ceases to have any foundation to rest upon or any purpose to serve, but not till then. It is necessary always, and more so in these days, to emphasise and underline the last four words "*but not till then*".

CHAPTER VIII

THE THREE BODIES

1. THE COVERINGS

We have so far dealt in a general way with the various subsidiary equations, which result from the primary equation of the soul with the physical body. But we do not stop with saying — I am lean, I am stout, etc. We appropriate to ourselves the functions and the qualities of the senses and also of the mind: We say, I see, I hear, I think, I doubt and so on. Necessity arises, therefore, for a classification of the faculties which we assume in this manner.

The world outside us is *acted* upon by us and it also acts upon us. The faculties which enable us to impress ourselves *on* the external world are known as *Karma-Indriyas*, Faculties of Action. The faculties which enable us to receive impressions *from* the outside world are given the name of *Jñāna-Indriyas*, Faculties of Sensation. To enable the several Faculties of Action to function, there must be a Power-house from which they can draw energy whenever required. Similarly, there must be another Power-house for the Faculties of Sensation. But sensation is twofold, one which only tells us that the thing before us is, for example, round or flat, and another which tells us whether

it is desirable or not. Hindu thinkers, therefore, consider the Power-house of Sensation in two strata, the Pure and the Impure. The thing as it *is*, is perceived by the Pure one; the thing as it *seems*, coloured by the previous impressions of the perceiving mind, is perceived by the Impure one. They envisage also a deeper principle, which is not a Power-house of either Action or Sensation, but is the potential state of both.

In the Vēdāntic phraseology, the Faculties of Action (Karmendriyas) along with the Power-house of Action (Prāna) make for the Soul a sheath, called *Prānamaya Kōśa*. The Faculties of Sensation (Jñānēndriyas) along with the Impure Section of the Power-house of Sensation (Manas); make another sheath, called *Manōmaya Kōśa*. The same Faculties of Sensation (Jñānēndriyas), along with the Pure Section of the Power-house of Sensation (Buddhi), constitute another sheath called *Vijñānamaya Kōśa*. In line with these, the potential principle which attaches itself to the soul and makes it forget its true equation with God is known as the *Ānandamaya Kōśa*; and the physical body which forms, as it were, the platform on which these faculties have their play is given the name of *Annamaya Kōśa*. Thus, in all we get five Kōśas, or Sheaths. But it is usual also to club all the faculties together under one head and call the aggregate unit as the Subtle Body *(Sūkshma Śarira)* as distinct from the physical body *(Sthūla Śāstra)*. The potential or causal element is then known as the causal body *(Kāraṇa Śarīra)*.

2. MIS-EQUATION WITH THESE

When you say "I am *stout* or *lean*", you equate yourself with the Gross Body. When you say "I *see*, I *talk*, I *desire*, I *think*", you equate yourself with the Subtle Body.

When you say "I *rest*, I *sleep* I am *peaceful*", the equation is with the Causal Body. Each one of these equations, however, is false and has to be got rid of before we can realise our true equation with God. By the practice of the several Dharmas mentioned in the previous chapter, it is no doubt possible to slowly get rid of the several subsidiary equations mentioned there, though the Dharmas themselves are based on those equations. "These are *your* duties as a father, these are *your* duties as a Brāhmaṇa" and so on, are the dictates of the Śāstras. The sensible aspirant will realise easily that these duties attach themselves to him only when he assumes particular capacities and that those capacities, by virtue of the very fact that they are capable of being assumed, cannot form as essential element of his own nature. He may soon, therefore, learn to dissociate himself from those capacities. But he cannot so easily get rid of the primary and antecedent mis-equation of himself with the physical body and the difficulty will be greater when he is asked to dissociate his true Self from the Subtle Body, and even from the Causal Body.

The mis-equation of the Self with the physical body is so deep and intense that many thinkers are unable to conceive of the soul as distinct from *this* physical body. Such thinkers are called Chārvākas (of pleasant speech) and, as may be expected, form a majority in the world. There are others who have risen to a conception of the soul transcending *this* physical body, but postulate that it clings to the subtle body and takes suitable physical bodies according to its deserts, wherever it may go, and lives on in such subtle body even when it attains salvation. This is generally the attitude of the various religionists in the world and among the Hindu thinkers particularly of the Tārkikas and the Meemāmsakas. There are others who are able to discard the necessity of the subtle body also, but cling to the causal

body for fear that without it the soul will lose its *individuality*, so precious to it. These thinkers are known as the Sānkhyas. It is only the Advaitī who boldly enunciates the true nature of the Soul as transcending even individuality and, therefore, identical with the Absolute and undifferentiated God Himself. Just as the Dharma Śāstras do not rudely disturb the mis-equations to which we have been accustomed, but utilises them for our betterment, so does the Vēdāntī never quarrel with the other systems of thought. The Vēdāntī evolves a synthesis where even the other systems can have appropriate places of usefulness in helping the true seeker onward in his march towards the final realisation of the Self, transcending all the three bodies.

3. THE GROWTH OF THE BODIES

As a necessary step in the process of *dis*-equating ourselves from the three bodies, a consideration of the nature of those bodies demands our attention. We may state even at the outset that an analysis of their composition will prove to us that they are fit only to be equated with the world and not with the Self in us. When you sit down to dine, you necessarily equate yourself with the physical body which is in need of food. The dinner is certainly and patently distinct from the food. In the act of dining, the former is the active agent and the latter a possive object. Suppose you put a morsel of food into your mouth and gulp it down and take up another morsel. Who is now the diner and what is the food? The diner of the second morsel is not exactly the diner of the morsel but is that diner *plus* the first morsel itself. The food at the time of the second morsel is not exactly what it was at the time of the first morsel, but is the same *minus* that first morsel. This process ordinarily goes on till all the morsels become merged into the diner and the plate becomes empty. Similarly, the diner of today is the

diner of yesterday *plus* the essence of yesterday's meal. The diner of yesterday was the diner of the day before *plus* the essence of that day's meal. This has been so ever since the need to dine arose. Assuming that there was a beginning for this ever retrogressing series of meals, and that there was a first meal, the diner of *that* meal when he sat before it could not possibly have in him the essence of any previous meal. He must, therefore, be taken as the Diner *par excellence*; the second diner is that Diner *plus* the first meal; the third diner is the second diner *plus* the second meal, that is, he is the first diner *plus* the first meal *plus* the second meal. Similarly, the fourth diner is the first diner plus three meals, and so on infinitely onwards upto the present moment. Therefore the person who sits down to dine now is the person who sat down to the first meal *plus* the essence of all the meals he hitherto had; and the person who sat down for the first meal was essentially free from the essence of any meal. We note also that there is a continuity of the same personality throughout and that the effect of the meals is felt only in the physical body.

If you bear this train of thought in your mind and recognise that your physical body is the sum total of the essence of all the things you have consumed, you will immediately become loath to equate yourself with that dody, for, though you may glory in being a *diner*, you will not certainly like to equate yourself with the essence of rice and curry and soup. This exercise is also useful in another way. When you recognise that, the moment after you put something into your mouth, *you* become even *it*, you will hesitate a great deal before you take in all kinds of food and drink.

Similarly, our present subtle body is the sum total of all the actions done and sensations experienced hitherto

from the time of our beginning to act and sense, assuming that there was such a time. The first *I* who attempted the first action or had the first sensation must have had no subtle body. Suppose a person living in a remote village goes to a city for the first time and sees its attractions. He immediately becomes the old person *plus* the sight-seer. If he goes to the same city a second time, he is not the old person only, but is the old person *plus* the first experience. The third time, he is the old person *plus* two experiences. And so on. This explains in a way why a thing which fascinates us immensely at the first sight, be it a doll or a woman, a star or a pebble, gradually loses its fascination for us though the thing itself be the same as before. The experiencer on the later occasion is not quite the same as the experiencer on the first occasion. The thief who steals for the first time is extremely nervous and is afraid of being caught and usually bungless in his attempt; the same thief when he steals again gets bolder and more expert in the execution of his deed, for he is now the original thief *plus* the facility gained in the first act of stealing. Thus action and experience, whether in the external world or in the world of thought, affect the composition and the constitution of the subtle body. So long as we are equating ourselves with that body, it must be our earnest endeavour to keep it as pure as possible, so that we may have some justification for, and not be ashamed of, the equation.

It is not possible to affect the composition of the causal body by any direct action on it, for it is not tangible. But, being the potential source from which the other bodies draw their inspiration and to which they owe their existence and power and into which they disappear and merge and rest, it can be regulated by our regulating the other two bodies. If, when we drink a cup of coffee we cultivate the habit of

looking upon that as distinct from the Self which consumes it and also of looking upon the coffee essence as distinct from that Self, it is not very difficult to realise that the Self is different from caffeine. When, therefore, we come to dis-equate the physical body from us and also to dis-equate the subtle body from us, it is not far step from there to dis-equate the causal body from us.

4. A CURIOUS TRAIT

But there is a curious habit which happens to be universal. When a coat which we have worn for some time becomes torn and useless for us, we do not immediately throw it into the dust-bin at the end of the street. We keep it with us till we give it to a beggar or to a collector of rags. The psychology of this phenomenon seems to be this. We are so accustomed to think of the coat as an object to be owned and possessed that we are loth to make it *dis*-owned immediately and possessed by nobody. We wait therefore for an opportunity to make it the property of somebody who is capable of owning and possessing it. Suppose, while walking you find a two anna piece lying on the road. You know it is not yours and you do not want it. Yet you stoop down and take it and pass it on to the first beggar or urchin that you meet on the road. Why? Here again the explanation is the same. Though the coin is not yours and you do not want to own it, your mind, from force of habit, is unable to tolerate the idea of a coin being ownerless. You do not therefore simply throw it off the road, but seek somebody who is capable of becoming its owner. You get still greater relief when *the* person who had dropped it claims it from you as his own. To be owned is, therefore, a necessary attribute of things and we feel uneasy when we find something without an owner.

The same trouble arises when we are asked to discard our bodies as unrelated to us. We are in the habit of looking upon our dodies as our own and even as ourselves. We look upon them as things to be owned. Suppose, in deference to the Vēdāntic teachings, we disown them. In that case we wonder whether they can remain without owners. Some people therefore devote their physical and mental bodies to the service of somebody else, say, the father, the Guru, the King, country, or religion and vest any of them with the dominium over them. The path of selflessness does lie that way, no doubt. But the Vēdāntic Ideal of selflessness is still higher.

CHAPTER IX

DEDICATION OF THE BODIES

1. WANTED A DONEE

In the previous chapter it was pointed out that an analysis of the composition of our bodies goes a long way towards correcting the mis-equation of our selves with them. The correction of this mis-equation is proportionate to the equation of our bodies with the external world. That is, the more and more we realise that our bodies rank with the matter found in the world outside, the less and less becomes the intensity of their being ranked with the soul. The end of this process is reached when the bodies are seen to be really matter, unfit to masquerade as the Soul. In other words, the bodies are completely cut off from the category of the spirit and identified with the world of matter. But as stated at the close of the previous chapter, we are, by force of habit, quite unwilling to throw away the bodies to which we have clung so long as our very selves. Just as we gladly part with the coin picked up on the road to a coinless beggar or its owner, so do we perhaps seek somebody who is bodiless or who could be the owner of the bodies, even when they are in our possession. That somebody is God, who happens to combine in Himself both these characteristics of being bodiless and yet of owning all the

bodies. If we disown the bodies and surrender them into His divine keeping, they cease to be ours and we have not to be troubled any longer by the worries which would attach themselves to us as long as we thought them to be ours and very often thought them to be *ourselves*. This is the attitude of the highest Bhakta or devotee. Instead of equating the bodies with the world of matter and then equating the world of matter with God, he adopts the short cut of equating the bodies with God Himself.

2. THE SUPREME DONEE

But there is a definite disadvantage in this short cut. The willingness to equate the bodies with God rather than with the world of matter may be due to an innate feeling that they are worth something. Our reluctance to throw the unwanted coin into the dustbin and seeking somebody who can own it, are both due to the fact that, even when *we* do not want the coin, we feel that *it* is a valuable thing. Though the stage may have been reached by us where we realise that the bodies have no value *for* us, we still cling to the thought that they are valuable in themselves and this thought effectively prevents us from agreeing to the idea of their being lost, as it were, in the world of matter. The same thought is responsible for preventing us from agreeing to the idea of their being lost or annihilated or of their losing individuality in God also, howsoever much we may have reconciled ourselves to the idea of their being equated with God. In other words, howsoever intensely and sincerely we may devote and dedicate our bodies to God, we expect Him to keep them and retain them as valuable things. When we pick up as an unwanted coin and pass it on gladly to a beggar instead of throwing it away, we shall feel insulted if before our very eyes the beggar throws it into the dustbin; and the insult is not in any way lessened

by the fact that we do *not* want the coin. Similarly when we pass on to God the ownership of our bodies we shall be sorely grieved if *He* makes them lose their individuality by dissolving them in the world of matter. It appears that when we dedicate our body to God, or anything else on which we set any value, we in our heart of hearts expect a grateful smile of thanks from Him and an implied promise that He will treasure our gift.

If you present a silver cup to a friend on the occasion of his marriage, you cease to have any ownership over it. And yet, if you happen to hear later that he pledged it with a pawn-broker or sold it to somebody else or melted it and made some other article out of its silver or lost it or even broke its rim or in fact did anything with it inconsistent with its remaining as a silver cup worthy of being treasured as a marriage present, you are sorely grieved and may also regret having made such a present to one who has proved to be so unworthy of it. Mind you, all this feeling comes to you long after you have ceased to have any ownership on the cup and this is explainable only on the basis that, though it is not yours, you still continue to attach value to it.

We do not pick up a pebble from the road and give it to a beggar or feel sorry if he throws it away. The highest devotee, who is prepared to surrender to God all his possessions and even his bodies, has a conception of God which is circumscribed by the idea that He must accept the gift with a "Thank you" and treasure it is a valuable acquisition and not do anything with it which would have the effect of impairing its value, and more particularly, which would make it lose its individuality or identity. "Even such a God am I who accepts and treasures with pleasure, the smallest thing you give to Me with true devotion" is the assurance of the Lord in His Sacred Song on the battle-field of Kurukshētra (Gītā, IX, 26). The

Divine Donee is never under any necessity to pledge, sell away or transform our gifts, nor is He likely to lose them, like the friend who gets the silver cup as a marriage present. The whole world is His Treasure House and Museum and He is carefully looking after it. He lives and has His being in every part of it, from the little body of the protoplasm to the cosmic body of *Hiranyagarbha*, and this for all time. He is the Eternal Friend of all, including the most insignificant of us and is ever ready to accept our sincere gifts howsoever humble. He is never ungrateful, never becomes unworthy and never slights or misuses our gifts. No occasion can possibly arise for our regretting our gifts to Him. Such is the God of the devotee.

3. THE EMBODIED GOD

The God to whom we can so dedicate our bodies *without* the latter losing their individuality, has necessarily to be conceived of as one who has, in His nature, a place, as it were, where He can provide accommodation for the bodies without their being dissolved or merged into Himself. He must be capable of being so equated not only with our bodies but with those of all who have bodies. Our conception of Him, therefore, is of one who has room in His nature for all the bodies of the world. As already stated, the bodies are threefold, the gross body of physical matter, the subtle body of mind-matter and the causal body of seed individuality. All these three bodies cling to, circumscribe and get equated with the *I* in us, who remains the same to all of them. Similarly, the God of the devotee who has to be the repository of all these three kinds of bodies has also to be considered as threefold, though the bodiless God inhering in them ever remains the same. God conceived of as the repository or sum-total of all physical bodies is known to the *Vēdāntī* as *Virāt* or *Vaiśvānara*. The

same God conceived of as the repository or sum-total of all subtle bodies is given the name of *Hiraṇyagarbha* or *Sūtrātmā*. The very same God conceived of as the repository or sum-total of all causal bodies is called *Īśvara* or *Antaryāmī*. The reader may have to be warned in this context against misleading himself into thinking that there are *three* Gods postulated in the Hindu religion. Just as *our* three bodies, the gross, the subtle and the causal, do *not* split out personality into three and just as that personality subsists throughout as only one, the conception of three cosmic bodies for God does not mean any splitting of Godhead into three, for He ever remains One. In Purāṇic phraseology, these three aspects of God are given the names of Brahmā, Viṣhnu and Rudra respectively. It is with such an "embodied" God that we can have any relationship as a part to the whole, as a servant to a master, as a beloved to the lover, as a son to a father and so on, that is, any kind of relationship short of identity. In fact, the idea of relationship is dependent on the granting of *two* relateable things and is not ordinarily consist with the idea of identity.

The equation therefore of our embodied Soul with the embodied God can never be a perfect of true equation, so long as we are unable to rise above the conception of the Soul or God as embodied. On the other hand, it will be an untrue and impossible statement if we say that the soul is God, accepting this limited denotation of these two terms. The Advaitī does *not* enunciate any such absurdity and we do not hesitate to say that that those who accuse the Advaitī of laying down any such absurd doctrine are yet far, far away from a proper understanding of the Advaita system. On the other hand he is as emphatic as any other theist in pointing out the vast

gulf that lies between the ignorant, impotent, little, individual Soul and the Omniscient, Omnipotent, Immense, Universal God, and also in drawing our attention to the extreme dependence of the former on the grace of the latter. The Advaitī appreciates, and never quarrels with, the attitude of the other theists. That *they* do not understand or appreciate his attitude is certainly no fault if his. He can put himself in the position of the man of the world or of the devotee and share their thoughts, but unfortunately *their* clinging to the world of Name and Form and to their own individuality effectively prevents them from looking up to a state of existence which transcends not only Name and Form but individuality as well. He does *not* say that their God is not God, for as already pointed out in an earlier chapter, everything that *is* is according to him, God himself, but he only says that the Absolute, the Supreme Excellence, ought not to be limited or coloured by any conception of our own limited minds.

4. ATTITUDE OF THE DEVOTEE

There is an important side-effect of equating our bodies with the cosmic bodies of God. The moment such an equation is made, howsoever vaguely or indefinitely, a sense of sacredness and of trust will arise in our own bodies. We will hesitate to pollute them or do anything with them, which may have the remote effect of affecting their sacredness as the property of God. When the devotee bathes, he thinks that he is cleaning the house of God. When he dines, he thinks that he is obeying the dictates of God. Such will be his attitude in every sphere of life. No action is needed or is possible but for the bodies; and when the bodies become God's, all actions, incidental to the possession of the bodies, become automatically actions for God. The need for and the possibility of all selfish action will

have ceased. But, as pointed out before, though the bodies have ceased to have value *for him*, they have not ceased to have *any* value at all. Therefore the conscious functioning of the bodies both in Karma and Bhakti will subsist, though they have ceased to be actuated by any motive of personal benefit; they will be performed as duties dictated by God and as acts of devotion pleasing to Him.

We may mention here that the devotee who has risen to a conception of the Cosmic God cannot possibly do wrong to or injure any other being, for even that being is a part and parcel of that God and the wrong or injury done to it will really amount to a wrong or injury to God Himself. You will be a hypocrite if you keep on treading on the toe of a friend while praising him to the skies. The attitude of the true devotee, therefore, towards all beings, from the lowest to the highest, all of which equally constitute the body of God, will be one of Reverence, Love and Service. Devotion to God and hatred of another being are things mutually incompatible. Forgetting of this patent fact is responsible for many a dissension in the name of God.

CHAPTER X

THE BODIES AND THE WORLD

1. A DIFFERENT DEDICATION

It was seen in the preceding chapter that the short cut of devotion which aimed at equating the individual Soul with God is not really competent to help us to a perfect equation, but can take us only to a stage where we can realise our absolute dependence upon God. Some systems of thought even in India are content to treat such realisation of dependence as the ultimate goal of life and postulate that, even in the state of salvation or freedom, we remain in a state of embodiment and bondage, though it be only to God. The Advaitī not only refuses to recognise such a state as the final goal of life, but holds that it is blasphemous to claim for us an independent existence even though it be in subordination to God. He grants the value of Dharma in getting us free from the accumulated Dirt and he grants the value of Bhakti in steadying our minds and getting us rid of all selfishness and desire born of our mis-equating ourselves with the bodies. But he points out that even the highest of Bhaktas cannot possibly rise above the idea of embodiment and does, on the other hand, think it necessary to clothe even God with an embodiment similar to his own. The Advaitī tackles the problem of mis-equa-

tion from a different standpoint altogether. He cuts asunder the mis-equation of the body with the soul by offering in its place an equation of the body with the world of matter and then takes us on to an equation of matter with God. It is only after making us realise the equation of matter with God and thereby reducing everything other than ourselves to a single entity called God, that he attempts to equate the individual Soul also to that God, so that He is realised to be the only Entity who deserves to be called Being.

2. THE FIVE ELEMENTS

In a previous chapter it has been pointed out that the physical body of ours is a creature of the external world as it originates from the food we consume. That it is really of the nature of food is seen from the fact that a starving man uses up for his sustenance the food material in his body itself and therefore grows thinner. If any further proof were needed to show that our body is food, we have as unimpeachable evidence the bugs, mosquitoes and other vermin who feast on us even while we are alive and the carnivorous animals for whom we are mere articles of food. The "food-ness" of our body therefore stands above all contradiction. As the food-ness of the food before us is beyond any controversy, the next step of relegating our body to the category of food found in the external world is not at all a controversial one.

There is another way of looking at this question. The scientists tell us that all the chemical elements found in our body are found in the external world. Apart from their "scientific" opinion, we know for a fact that the existence of the physical body of a being is brought home to another through the faculties of sensation and, therefore, the physical

body must contain and consist of factors capable of reacting on the faculties of sensation of the other. They are the faculties of Hearing, Touching, Seeing, Tasting and Smelling. The external world also makes its existence felt to us only through these very faculties and therefore it must be concluded to contain and consist of factors capable of reacting on our faculties. If the body and the external world are thus both composed of materials reacting on our faculties of Hearing, Touching, Seeing, Tasting and Smelling, we shall certainly be justified in classing the physical body along with the world of matter outside. It may seem a layman's analysis but it is nevertheless true and eternal. We do not require a scientist to tell us that the physical body, as much as the external world, is made up of the five substances—Space (Ākāśa) whose reaction is Sound (Śabda), Vibration (Vāyu) whose reaction is Touch (Sparśa), Light (Tējas) whose reaction is Form (Rūpa), Fluid (Ap) whose reaction is Taste (Rasa) and Solid (Prithvī) whose reaction is Smell (Gandha). We confess that these English equivalents do not correctly or fully bring out the true significance of the Sanskrit terms, but we have to use them for want of better substitutes. Readers who have acquainted themselves with the rudiments of Hindu philosophy will be familiar with these terms and their proper significance. The physical body and the physical world outside are both characterised as *Pāncha-bhoutika*, composed of the Five Elements, and, therefore, classed in the same category. The physical body is accordingly only a part of the physical world.

3. THE SUBTLE ELEMENTS

It has been mentioned before that our subtle body is the resultant of all our previous actions and experiences and

is now sustained by actions and experiences or, rather nourished or affected by them. What is the nature of the effect which they make on the subtle body? Just as the diner of the second morsel of food is the diner of the first morsel *plus* the first morsel, so is the experiencer of the second object the experiencer of the first object *plus* the experiencer of the first object itself. Here again, just as the first morsel of food does not simply stick on to the diner but is assimilated in the form of essence, so is a particular experience assimilated in its essence in the experiencer. The object that we see or enjoy in the outside world does not get into ourselves, but a subtle impression, photographic as it were, of that object does remain in our mind substance for ever afterwards. These impressions, whether of action or of experience, good or bad, pure or coloured, pleasant or painful, get themselves coated on ourselves and the coat gets thicker day by day and minute by minute. These impressons go under the generic name of *Samskāras*. When at any moment any of the Samskāras show a tendency to express themselves, they are called *Vāsanās*. Very often this distinction between the non-active Samskāras and the active Vāsanās is not kept in view and either of these terms is used to signify the other or both of them. It need hardly be stated that the impression recorded must correspond to the object experienced. This is also clear from the fact that, when we close our eyes and recollect an experience, the object is again projected before our mind's eye just as we saw it before. When we hear a song, a song impression is made and the same when recollected or reproduced is projected only as a song. Thus with all impressions which constitute and adhere to and get assimilated with the subtle body. The subtle body is therefore said to be composed of subtle substances corresponding to the physical subtances called the Five Elements. As these

gross substances constituting an object experienced do not by themselves enter our mind, except through their subtler forms constituting the impressions, we have to assume that every external object has its being in subtler substances capable of making an impression on the fine and sensitive mind substance. Such subtler substances, of which the contents of the perceived physical object are but gross forms, are known by the name of *Tan-Mātras.* There is a Tanmātra or Subtle Element for every Gross Element and they are also therefore five in number. Sometimes the Tanmātras are conceived of as the causal substances and the Subtle and Gross Elements as their manifest effects. It does not really matter what they are called. The subtle Ākāśa is the material out of which the faculty of Hearing is made; the subtle Vāyu is the material of the faculty of Touching; the subtle Tējas is that of the faculty of Seeing; the subtle Ap is that of the faculty of Tasting; and the subtle Prithivi is that of the faculty of Smelling. They all combine and form the material of the common mind substance.

Similarly, in the external world it is the Ākāśa that makes it possible for an object to be heard; it is the Vāyu, the Tējas, the Ap and the Prithvī that make it possible for it to be touched, seen, tasted or smelt. Thus the composition of objects of the external world and of the faculties, individual and aggregate, which sense them is the same.

Once we realise this, it cannot be very difficult to class the subtle body consisting of those faculties with the subtle elements of the universe. If we bear this truth even slightly in our mind whenever we function through the subtle body, we cannot but hesitate when we are face to face with actions and experiences which are likely to have a deletrious effect on the composition of our subtle body. Till we have, not

only in our fancy but as a matter of fact, transcended all possibility and chances of our ever equating ourselves with the subtle body, we must be careful about its composition. So long as the mind exists and clothes us with all sorts of functions like those of the thinker, the doubter, the seer, the enjoyer and so on, and so long as we consider ourselves as capable of action or experience, we are equating ourselves with the subtle body and it is idle to pretend that our mind can remain pure even when we act or experience as the whim dictates to us.

4. THE CONTROL OF THE BODIES

In fact, as pointed out before, no mind can be pure for its substance is made up of the impressions of infinite varieties of action and experience. All that we can do is to regulate the coming up of the impressions into active life, by suppressing or trying to counteract the injurious impressions and by drawing out or encouraging the beneficial impressions. Such a code of conduct for the regulation of the senses and of the mind is also furnished by the Dharma Śāstras. The Yōga system specialises in such regulation and points out several ways in which activities of the mind can be controlled. The Yōgī rightly feels that it is impossible to attempt at any regulation of the subtle body unless the physical body is already under control. Therefore, first he regulates the physical body in its relationship to the external world by certain practices which go by the name of *Yama* (Restraint). He then regulates the working of the physical body in itself by other practices or rules of conduct known as *Niyama* (Control). Then he makes it steady by adopting *Āsana* (Posture). Thus having brought the physical body under control, he begins the control of the subtle body by first regulating its outermost section, Prāna, by the process

known as *Prānāyāma* (Breath-Control) and then withdrawing the senses from the external world *(Pratyāhāra)*. Then the steadying of thought, *Dhāraṇa*, is taken up and by persistent effort this makes it possible for him to have a continued and uninterrupted flow of a single thought (*Dhyāna*) the climax of which is reached when the process of thought ceases to be and perception is a state rather than an activity *(Samādhi)*.

Such are the difficult processes which the Indian sages have taken so much pains to enunciate for the benefit of mankind and anybody who has made the slightest attempt to regulate his body, physical or subtle, will have known by experience how difficult really it is to regulate them. To those who are content to be what they are and do not know that there are higher objects in life than what the senses can supply to them, such regulations may seem foolish and even unnatural, as they purport to interfere with the "freedom" of man to range himself with the animal! But to those who earnestly want to rise above all embodiment, such regulations are not only desirable but are quite essential.

As mentioned before, the causal body is more a matter of conception than a tangible object. Corresponding to the casual body, in which is hidden the potentiality from which our subtle body and our physical body both draw their powers of expression, the Vēdānta postulates a universal causal substance which is the potential cause of all that finds expression either in the world of physical matter or in the world of subtle matter. Just as we are asked to equate our physical body with the physical world and our subtle body with the subtle world, so are we asked to equate our causal body also with the world cause. When we have arrived at such a high stage of realisation as to make the

former two equations, the third equation follows as a matter of course. No independent effort is needed to attain it, for all effort can relate only to the two lower bodies. The aspirant who thus gradually reaches a stage when he is able to cut asunder the misequation of the Soul with the bodies by equating them with the world can no more be troubled by anything which may happen to those bodies for he will have realised his independence of and unrelatedness to them. What more is there for him to strive for or achieve? Has he not reached the goal of life? "No" answers the merciless Advaitī. It may be that that aspirant has nothing more to strive for or achieve. But he has still to *learn* and to *know*.

CHAPTER XI

DEPENDENT EXISTENCE

1. THE ULTIMATE CAUSE

While dealing with the attitude of the devotee, we mentioned that he relinquishes the ownership of his bodies and transfers them to the ownership of God and conceives of them thereafter only as parts of the corresponding universal bodies of God. Instead of making a single equation of the individual Soul with God, the only proper thing to do, he makes a triple equation of the adjuncts of the Soul, namely, the three bodies, with the similar adjuncts of God.

We mentioned also that this latter equation was not and could not be perfect and that the more straightforward process was to equate the bodies with the external matter and then to equate that matter with God. But the reader will have noticed in the last chapter that in our attempt to equate the bodies with the external world we found that the equation took the form of realising the identity of the substances which entered into the composition of the bodies as well of the external world. Therefore, what we have really equated is the Sound-substance (subtle or gross) in our bodies with the Sound-substance (subtle or gross) in the external world, the Touch-substance (subtle or gross) in us with the Touch-substance (subtle or gross) outside,

and so on. Thus there are five independent equations. Further, in each one of these equations, we only realise that the Sound-substance, Touch-substance etc. in our bodies are only *parts* of the Sound-substance, Touch-substance etc. in the entire universe. How then are we any the nearer to the perfect equation than the devotee? On the other hand, the enquirer who starts this analytical perception of identity seems to be really farther off from that equation. No doubt, it would be so if he stops with the formulation of *five* primary substances. But he does not. Having analysed the bodies and the external world and having realised that they all trace their origin to and have their being in the Five Elements—Ākāśa, Vāyu, Tējas, Ap and Prithvī, he proceeds to analyse the characteristics of each one of these. He finds, and the Vēdas help him to find, that Ākāśa, (Space) is characterised by the single quality known as Sound, that Vāyu has two qualities (Sound and Touch), that Tējas has three qualities (Sound, Touch and Form), that Ap has four qualities(Sound, Touch, Form and Taste) and that Prithvī has five qualities (Sound, Touch, Form, Taste and Smell). He realises, therefore, that Ap is present not only in things catalogued as Ap, but also in Prithvī. Similarly, Tējas is present in Ap and Prithvī; Vāyu is present in Tējas, Ap and Prithviī; and Ākāśa in all the other four. He notes also that Prithvī (e.g. a stone) does not expand by itself, while a drop of water (Ap) spreads itself out. A tiny spark of Light (Tējas) spreads out its form-substance to a great distance. A Vibration (Vāyu) reaches greater distances than light. Space (Ākāśa) spreads out everywhere. He notes further that Ap is finer in substance than Prithvī, Tējas is finer than Ap, Vāyu is finer than Tējas, and Ākāśa is finer than Vāyu. He then correlates these noted facts and sees that Prithvī with five qualities is the grossest and least

expansive, that Ap with four qualities is less gross and more expansive, that Tējas with only three qualities is finer and still more expansive, that Vāyu with only two qualities is still finer and still more expansive and that Ākāśa with a single quality is the finest and most expansive. He realises also that the finer substance always pervades the grosser. The same process of reasoning which helped him to trace all things in the world to five primary elements will now help him to realise that, among themselves, Ap is the causal element of Prithvi, Tējas is the causal element of Ap and therefore of Prithvī also, Vāyu is the causal element of Tējas and therefore of Ap and Prithvī as well, and Ākāśa is the causual element of all the other four. That is, he will realise that, though the five elements differ from one another in certain characteristics, they are in substance but Ākāśa, the name Ākāśa being reserved for the Causal Element and the names of Vayu, Tejas, Ap and Prithvī being given to its gross modifications in varying degrees. From there it is not a far step to realise that Ākāśa, characterised by the quality Sound, is itself a phenomenal effect and cannot therefore be the ultimate cause, and that the ultimate cause must transcend even that quality, that is, be quality-less, and yet at the same time contain the potentiality of assuming all the qualities. The potential cause is known variously as *Avyakta* (the Un-manifest), *Prakriti* (Root-Matter), *Pradhāna* (Prime-Substance), and so on.

2. THE NAME ADVAITA

The same Cause vitalised, as it were, by its organic relationship to God is in the Advaita system known as *Śakti* or *Māyā* and God Himself conceived of as so related to it gets then the name of Śakta or Māyāvī. Thus the earnest enquirer guided by the Vēda is able to reduce everything

in the world to a single substance, the Unmanifest Power, the Potential Cause of all the universe. For him only three things exist, God, that Potential Cause and himself.

Just as the scientists believed at one time that there were a number of elements which were not capable of being split up into simpler substances, so do most of the philosophical systems of the world and even of India itself maintain that these three remain for ever irreducible. That is, they grant to the Root Cause of Matter and to the Individual Soul *equal* existence with God. It is only the Advaitī that has the boldness to say that, if God is *Being*, anything else, be it the Root-matter or the Soul, if it is concieved of as distinct and different from God, cannot possibly share the characteristic of Being and cannot therefore *be*. He denies them the characteristic of Being and says that they are not and cannot be. This is no doubt a somewhat staggering proposition, but the careful reader will note that the statement is only a conditional one. The Advaiti is not so foolish as to enunciate that the world of matter or of the Soul does not exist, but he is emphatic in saying that they have no existence *independent* of God, who is Being. According to Him, the World and the Soul *do* exist, but exist only because of their being pervaded by God, the only existing Reality. If, by any process, God could be withdrawn from the world and the Soul, they would cease to be. As pointed out before, the gold necklace exists as such only because the substance gold pervades its form. If gold were withdrawn from the necklace, the necklace would cease to exist. The necklace is not identical with gold, it is true; but it is equally true that the necklace is *not distinct* from gold. It is mainly the inability to understand this patent truth of non-distinction without identicality that stands in the way of the appreciation of the Advaita system of thought by most thinkers. They assume and proceed on

the basis that non-distinction always means identity. The Advaitī does *not* say that Matter is the same as God or that the Soul is the same as God; and yet all the criticisms that are levelled against him are based on the assumption that he does say so. All that he says is that Matter is not distinct from God. Is it not the same thing, they ask, put in different words? *No* is the emphatic answer of the Advaitī. The confusion is still further increased when the word Advaitavēda (Enunciation of Non-Duality) is taken to mean Aikyavāda (Enunciation of *Oneness*) and is wrongly translated as Monism. When the word Monism (or Identity) is so handy, there must have been some special significance in choosing the negative word Non-Dualism (or Non-Distinction). If we assume that the Vēdānta and its propounders chose the latter word only to express in a round about way the very same idea as is denoted by the simpler word, we are gratuitously crediting them with a foolishness for which they will never thank us.

3. AN ANALYSIS

How can a thing which is not identical with another yet remain not distinct from it? We all know what a cow is. When we see a particular specimen of that species, we at once recognise it as a cow; when we see another specimen, we recognise that also as a cow; and so on. Our conception of a cow does not confine itself to and is not exhausted by a particular cow. The generic cowness which we recognise in each individual of that species is a thing apart from the particular cows themselves, for, though the latter may pass out of our sight, our conception does not disappear with them. But can we ever see cowness by itself without any relation to particular concrete specimens? It is impossible to do so, for cowness is an abstraction which has no existence apart from the concrete cows themselves; still

cowness is not identical with any particular cow. Thus we have in Cowness an example of a thing which does not exist independent of another and yet is not identical with it.

Whiteness is a quality which is found in everything that is white. Whiteness is not identical with the wall or the paper that is white; and yet we can never see whiteness by itself without reference to some concrete thing which has that colour. So with other qualities. Here again, we have another example of a thing which is incapable of existing by itself and independently of another and yet is not identical with it.

Cooking is the function of a cook and is present in whoever cooks and is not confined to any particular cook. Cooking is not identical with any particular cook; and yet we can never see cooking by itself unrelated to a concrete cook. It is the same with other functions also. We have here a third example of a thing which is incapable of independent existence but is yet not identical with another thing.

Similarly, a peon is one who is related to another as his servant. We cannot possibly have any conception of a peon unless we relate him to a master, known or unknown. The conception of a peon, therefore, is impossible of existence independent of the conception of a master; and yet this does not certainly mean that a peon and a master are identical with each other. So with other relationships, such as son and father, husband and wife, king and subject, and so on. These furnish a fourth example of things which have no independent existence but are yet not identical with the things on which they depend for their existence.

Our ancients analysed the universe and came to the conclusion that only these four sets of examples can be found where dependent existence and non-identity coexist and they assign to them the names of (1) *Jāti* (Genus)

and *Vyakti* (Individual) (2) *Guṇa* (Quality) and *Guṇi* (Qualified) (3) *Kriyā* (Function) and *Kriyāśraya* (Functioner) (4) *Sambandha* (Relation) and *Sambaddha* (Related).

4. MATTER AND GOD

Of these, under which class can we bring Matter and God, if they do not exist independently and yet are not identical with each other? If we treat Matter as the genus and God as the individual, there must be a large number of Gods coming under the single category of the genus Matter —a patently absurd hypothesis. If we treat God as the genus and Matter as the individual; here again there must be as many Gods as there are particles of Matter as every such particle is an individual specimen of the genus God— an equally absurd hypothesis. If matter is quality and God is the qualified, we are dethroning God from His high position as the Unqualified Absolute; if God is quality and Matter is the qualified, we are making God an attribute and Matter the substantive. If Matter is mere function and God is the functioner, we are ascribing to God a state of eternal restlessness; if God is the function and Matter the functioner, we are necessarily subordinating God to Matter. Further in all these three cases, Genus, Quality or Function, if we bring in either God or Matter under these categories, we are reducing Him or it to the position of a mere abstraction. Genus, Quality and Function are *not concrete things* (Dravya). If we accept that God and Matter *are* concrete things and not mere abstactions, we shall not be justified in bringing either of them under these categories. The fourth category of Relatedness alone remains to be considered.

CHAPTER XII

THE SUPREME CAUSE

1. THE CASES

Relatedness can be clearly expressed with the help of grammatical cases. Using the accusative case to denote the objective relationship, we say that God creates Matter, sustains it or destroys it. The same idea is arrived at when we use the instrumental case and say that Matter is created *by* God, sustained *by* Him or destroyed *by* Him. As Matter, inert as it is, can have no purpose of its own to serve by its existence, we say that it exists *for* God, using the dative case. When we grant that Matter is created by God, we tacitly grant that Matter is *from* God. When we grant again that Matter has to be created by God, for God, from God and that it has to be sustained by God Himself, for His own purpose, we cannot but grant that He is the owner *of* Matter and that Matter is of God. When we grant further that Matter has to be sustained by God and that it dissolves at the end into Him, we necessarily concede that God is *in* every particle of matter to sustain it and that Matter is *in* God, as otherwise it would cease to be. Thus we are able to see that the relationship between God and Matter can be brought under any of the kinds denoted by the above cases, the accusative (Karma), the instrumental (Kartā or Karaṇa),

the dative (Sampradāna), the ablative (Apādana), the possessive (Sambandha) and the locative (Adhikarana). But curiously enough this very ability to fulfil *all* the case-denotations creates trouble.

If a pot is made by a potter, the pot is certainly not *in* the potter, though it may be possible to say that it is for him, it is from him and it belongs to him. If a fruit is *from* a particular tree, it cannot now be *in* it or be part *of* it though it was once in the tree and belonged to it. The preposition *from* denotes separation, the preposition *in* denotes contact; the ideas conveyed by them are mutually contradictory. If I come from a particular building, I cannot at the same time be in it. Again taking the instrumental case alone, a pot is certainly made *by* a potter, but it is certainly not made *with* the potter, the *with* really bringing out the instrumentality far more than "by". Taking the pot as a typical example we may say that it is created *by* a potter, and *for* his use and is *his* property and that it is created *with* mud and *from* mud and is *of* mud and rests *in* mud. That is, if we consider a pot, we find two kinds of factors related to it, one an active agent, who for his own purposes creates it and owns it and the other a passive material which is worked upon and used by that active agent for evolving a pot which is accordingly made from mud, which is even now of mud, which has its existence in mud and into which it has ultimately to disappear after it breaks. The Active Agent is known as the *Nimitta Kārana* the efficient cause, and the Passive Material as the *Upādānā Kārana*, the material cause, and they respectively represent the *by* aspect and the *with* aspect of the instrumental case-denotation.

If God then is capable of taking upon Himself all the case-denotations, we must postulate of Him that He is the Active Agent *as well as* the Passive Material. He is the

potter as well as the mud. In fact, such is the dual position assigned to Him in Vēdānta when He is considered in relationship to the World or Matter. He is both Nimitta Kārana and Upādāna Kārana, the Efficient Cause and the Material Cause.

2. THE UNIVERSE AND GOD

Thus in trying to understand the relationship between God and Matter, we have reached a state where, for the purpose of understanding properly the relationship, we have, as it were, to conceive of God in two aspects the Conscious Active Agent responsible for the creation, sustenance and dissolution of the universe of matter and the Unconscious Passive Material from which that universe is created, by which it is sustained and into which it dissolves. It is well known that, in the birth of a child, the nucleus of life is supplied by the father and that it grows by drawing on the material in the mother's body. It is usual, therefore, to characterise the Active Agent aspect of God as the Father of the universe and the Passive Material aspect of God as the Mother of the universe. He is generally called the Father or the Mother according as we give prominence to either of those aspects. When it is not desired to subordinate either of these aspects to the other, He is conceived of as the Father-Mother. The reader will notice that whether He is taken to be the Father, or the Mother, or the Father-Mother, His causal relationship to the universe of matter is not lost sight of at all.

Many a system of philosophical thought and religion is content with an enunciation of the Fatherhood of God; a few recognise His Motherhood; and very few the Father-Mother nature of God. Here again it is only the Advaitī that is not content even with these enunciations. It is true

that a child comes from a father but, if the father happens to go away or die the moment after the impregnation, the child does not certainly cease to be; if a potter dies or disconnects himself from a pot, the latter does not cease to be. Though the active agent may be necessary to bring an effect into existence, the effect does *not* depend for its continued existence on that agent. It may be more true to say that a child comes from its mother and is sustained by her while in her womb and also for sometime after it is born; but no child when it dies re-enters the mother from whom it came out. The attribution of fatherhood and motherhood to God, no doubt, brings into prominent relief the characteristics of creating and sustaining the universe, but ignores the characteristic of God as that *into* which the universe dissolves. The Advaitī points out that, if I come from a particular place and yet am in it and that if I leave a particular place and yet only walk into it, such a phenomenon is possible only if we grant to that place sufficient extensiveness so as to comprehend the place I come from, the place I am in and the place I go into. That is, in other words, the place is really one but conceived of in parts to explain my activities; if *I* do not move at all, there is no need for postulating any limited conception of place qualified by the propositions *from*, *in* or *into*. Such postulation is therefore not necessary for the enunciation of the place at all, except in relation to me. Similarly, if Matter is from God ,is in God and is dissolved into God, God must certainly be more comprhensive than Matter, lend existence to it, sustain it by His own existence and withdraw it into Himself. Such lending of existence or sustaining and withdrawing it can never form essential attributes of God, for they come into play only when God is conceived of in relation to Matter. He is, therefore, in essence unqualified by these attributes and is ever one and changeless.

3. THEIR TRUE RELATIONSHIP

The universe is, as it were, a passing scene thrown on the eternal background of God. The scene cannot be perceived except for the background and yet is not identical with that background. What is the relationship between the scene and the background? The scene is the seeming—transient and unsubstantial, the background is the reality—permanent and substantial. If the scene is withdrawn, the background will continue to exist as before; if, on the other hand, the background is withdrawn, the scene will cease to exist, for it has no independent substance in it other than the substance of the background whereon it appears. The background and the scene do not exist as two independent things which can be related to each other in any of the known ways generally denoted by the denotations of the grammatical cases.

A relationship to be real assumes the existence of two things and assumes their simultaneous existence as two things at least at the moment of the relationship. And further the two things conceived of as related to each other must both be real in the same sense. A man who at the dead of night feels in his dream the excessive heat of the sun will get no relief by a real gust of cold wind. A man who thinks himself bitten by a cobra (which is really only a rope mistaken by him for a cobra) cannot be cured by any number of injections or Mantric treatment. The suffering and the relief to be able to be related to each other must both belong to the same plane of existence, that is, they must both be real or both be only seeming. We have however in the foregoing pages seen that God is the only Reality and that everything else is but a seeming, a passing scene projected on the eternal canvas that is He. How can there be then any sort of relationship between God and Matter

which seem to exist on different planes of existence, the one of eternal reality and the other of ephemeral seeming?

4. UNRELATEDNESS

In his stern and unflinching regard for logic, fortified as it is by the unequivocal words of the Vēdānta, the Advaitī does not hesitate to say that God in His essence is verily *Asanga*, unrelated to anything, for nothing else exists but God. But he recognises also the difficulty of the ordinary enquirer understanding this position at the start and also the need for satisfying his enquiring mind with an enunciation of some kind of relationship between God and Matter, and also between God and the Soul. He points out that the cases denoted by the prepositions *by*, *to*, *from*, *of*, *in*, etc. and the objective case all necessarily assume the existence of two things which can be related to each other by any of those prepositions or by a predicate connecting the two. He argues therefrom that, if God and Matter are *not* two independent things which can be so related to each other, we must be able to express the relationship between them *without* using any of these prepositions and *without* using the predicate which requires an object. In other words, to explain to us the relation between God and Matter or between God and the Soul, we require a sentence where the relation between them is expressed without the use of any preposition and without the use of any predicate requiring an object. We have necessarily, therefore, to find out a verb which is intransitive. The reader will recall that we have already found that functioning cannot be attributed to God. We want, therefore, a verb which is intransitive and does not denote *any* functioning. Any kind of functioning, be it the most simple or elementary, necessarily implies a change, howsoever imperceptible, in the state of the functioner. When we seek a verb which is free

from any idea of functioning, it must necessarily be free from any idea of change of state. Consequently it must imply a changeless state; that is, it must denote a *status* and not a condition. Happily for us, such a verb is to be found in the verb "*to be*". It is worthy of note also that it is the only verb that satisfies all the requirements mentioned above. Having thus arrived at the predicate, we have to frame a sentence using God and Matter or God and the Soul *without* using any preposition. The reader will now easily realise that such sentences are "God is Matter" and "God is the Soul" or the other way about. That is, the *nominative* case alone is used for both the substantives in the sentence and the most colourless intransitive verb "be", denoting bare unqualified existence, is used for the predicate. When two substantives are so put together and the relationship between them is expressed by the verb "be", they are said to be in *apposition* with each other. Thus we arrive at the relationship between God and Matter or between God and the Soul as one of apposition. This is why the Sacred Vēda when trying to enunciate that relationship uses sentences like "Verily all this is Brahman" with reference to the universe and "Thou art That" with reference to the Soul. In fact, as we have seen before, there is no other way of expressing that relationship correctly. The use of any other case but the nominative, either for God or Matter (or Soul), and the use of any other verb but "be" as the predicate necessarily detracts from the characteristic of God as *Being* and as the *only* Being. It may be asked whether the detraction is any the less when Matter or the Soul is made the nominative of the sentence which has "be" for the predicate. It is therefore necessary to understand what is meant by *apposition*. We shall now proceed to consider it.

CHAPTER XIII

THE TRUE EQUATION

1. APPOSITION

Technicality apart, two substantive words in a sentence are said to be in apposition with each other when they can be placed on either side of the connecting predicate "be" and its variations. The function of the predicate in such a sentence is to equate the two substantives that figure on either side of it. To know therefore what apposition means is to know what equation means.

2. PERFECT IDENTITY

The proposition that $6=6$ is absolutely true and beyond any possibility of contradiction and yet no espouser of the cause of truth ever thinks of writing a book which may expound this proposition. If such a book were published, nobody would care to read it, for the knowledge imparted by it, though undoubtedly true, conveys nothing new to the reader. It is the essential condition of any teaching that it must teach something new and must benefit the learner, howsoever little. As the statement $6=6$ satisfies neither of these conditions, it has no educative value at all; in fact, it is a superfluous and meaningless statement and has no claim to be called an equation worthy of being taught.

3. EVALUATION

$5+1=6$ is another proposition which is equally true. The ultimate value of the factor on one side of the sign of equality is not perceivable on the face of it and we have to do some process regarding that factor before we can get at

its value, but the other factor happens to be the value itself. So that for the purpose of realising the true significance of the sign of equality we have to simplify or evaluate one factor only. Such propositions, where some process of simplification or evaluation has to be done with references to only one of the factors on either side of the sign of equality, are not usually called equations.

4. EQUATION

$5+1=2\times3$ is an example of the perfect equation. The truth of the sign of equality is not apparent on the face of the proposition and the simplification or evaluation of only one of the factors does not directly yield the other factor. There have to be two processes of simplification or evaluation, each of them leading to the same result, thereby justifying the sign of equality. $5+1$ evaluated yields *6*; 2×3 evaluated yields the same 6; we therefore see that the evaluated content of $5+1$ is the same as the evaluated content of 2×3 and, therefore, equate them together by putting between them the sign of equality. If for any reason we decline to evaluate the content of $5+1$ or 2×3, their identity can never be perceived by us. If we insist on retaining or refuse to dissociate the shapes and contours of the figures and signs in $5+1$ or 2×3 or if we insist on retaining or refuse to dissociate the sound that we produce when reading out either of those factors, we can never possibly have any conception of their intrinsic value. If we attach importance to the shape or the sound in $5+1$ and attach importance equally to the shape or the sound in 2×3, they must remain eternally distinct factors for the shape or sound of the one can never be the same as the shape or sound of the other. The equation can be perceived only when we are content to discard the shape or sound and see into the essence of both the factors on either side of the sign of equality. The reader will now recognise the need for the

elimination of Names and Forms of the things sought to be equated with each other. The same principle holds good from the simplest equation to the highest.

"A Ring is a Ring" is a meaningless statement though true; "A Ring is Gold" is a statement which is true, but the truth is perceivable when we ignore the name and the form of the "Ring" and recognise the substance in it which is Gold. Neither of these statements is a perfect equation. "A Ring is the same as the Chain", a seemingly self-contradictory statement, is an example of the perfect equation, for here, if the names and forms of both the Ring and the Chain are ignored and if their intrinsic substance alone is given attention to, the justification for the statement of equality will at once become apparent.

5. THE TEACHING OF THE VĒDA

The Advaitī in his uncompromising and stern regard for truth and logic refuses therefore to acknowledge the educative value of any so-called equation which is patently true and conveys no new knowledge or of any equation which is really only an evaluation of *one* of the factors of that equation. "The Soul or the World is Not-God" is too patent a proposition and it requires no teacher, much less the supreme Vēda, to teach us this patent fact. He therefore enunciates and maintains the proposition that the Vēda is of use to us only when it teaches us something which no amount of direct perception through the senses or of intellectual reasoning can ever tell us. Revelation is required and has any usefulness only when it relates to matters beyond the reach of the senses and the mind. "The World is Matter" is too patent a proposition to need any revelation to proclaim it. "All the world is traceable to and has its existence in a single Substance" is another proposition which though not patent is still within the scope of intellectual reasoning. "The Soul is Spirit" is another patent

proposition which does not need any revelation to enunciate it. "All souls are but sparks of a Universal spirit" is yet another proposition which may be possible to arrive at by a process of intellectual reasoning, though many a thinker is unable to soar so high.

The Advaitī in his firm faith in the Vēda as the highest revelation would not concede that its highest teachings can stop with any of the propositions just mentioned as too patent or easily deducible. He, therefore, attaches supreme significance to the passages which proclaim the identity of the Substantial Substratum of Matter and of the Spiritual Base of Souls, the *Brahman* and the *Jvam*, the That and the Thou. Anything short of this is not, according to him, worth the name of a perfect equation. Evaluate the factors that appear on either side of the sign of equality by removing from those factors all names and forms, the elements which are responsible for and maintain the sense of distinction, arrive at their substance or unqualified essentiul nature and realise that there is no further possibility of any kind of distinctiveness and recognise the full significance of the sign of equality in its absolute and unqualified sense. Once such a realisation and recognition are had, there really cease to be *two* factors which are capable of being related to each other even by the intervening sign of equality. That sign has no more function to serve and the two factors and the sign altogether merge into a single conception which transcends all thought or expression. Such is the true state of illumination of the knower of Truth as enunciated by the Vēdānta and as explained by the Advaitī. The "process" of equating or the "process" of knowing which necessarily assumes the distinctness between the factors to be equated and the distinctness between the knower and the to-be-known has no further use for him, for he has regained his own status of oneness which knows and admits of no differentiation at all.

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CHAPTER XIV

KINDS OF EQUATION

1. SYNONYM

Equation, which enunciates the relation of identity between two factors that are on either side of the sign of equality or are said to be in apposition with each other, has been considered by the Master Thinker Śrī Śankarāchārya as generally falling under four classes, namely, *Synonymous*, *Adjectival*, *Imposed* and *Vanishing*. We shall now try to understand the significance of each of these.

When two words differing in sound are placed in apposition to each other only for the purpose of bringing out the meaning of one of them, without attaching any significance to the difference in the sounds or to the reason which made it possible for different sounds to be used to convey the same idea, those two words are called synonyms, e.g. *Aśva* is *Horse*. The sounds of these two words are different from each other. But they both signify the same animal. It does not matter that the first word is Sanskrit and the second English. *Saindhava* is *Aśva* is another example where both the words belong to the Sanskrit language. If we attach to the word "Saindhava" any more significance than that it merely means a horse and see in it any reference to its birth in the land of the Sindhu, it becomes a descriptive adjective and is not a mere synonym.

2. ADJECTIVE

Adjectives are generally of two kinds, the *distinctive* and the *descriptive*. Both define and point out the substantive which they govern, but there is some vital difference in the method of definition. In the *distinctive* adjectives prominence is given to the attributes which are *not* in the substantive, that is, they aim at *distinguishing* that substantive from others by drawing our attention to the attributes which are present in the latter and are absent in the former. In the descriptive adjective, on the other hand, prominence is given to the attributes which *are* in the substantive, that is, they aim at describing that substantive by drawing our attention to the attributes which are present in that substantive and are absent from others. The difference between these two classes lies only in this fact that the distinctive adjectives are concerned generally with negative attributes and descriptive adjectives with positive ones. The word "Fearless" may characterise a man, but it only signifies that fear that would ordinarily be found in similar circumstances in others is absent in him. It is, therefore, a negative or distinctive adjective. The word "Courageous" may equally characterise him, but points out the existence in him of the positive quality of courage. It is, therefore, a positive or descriptive adjective. The statement that Brahman is handless, mouthless, lengthless, breadthless, colourless, shapeless, odourless, etc. furnishes examples of the distinctive attribute. The statement that the same Brahman is eternal, true, conscious, blissful, pervasive etc. furnishes examples of the descriptive attribute.

Again among the descriptive attributes it is necessary to distinguish two classes, temporary and permanent. "Bring me that man *standing in front of the temple*". Here the adjectival phrase "standing in front of the temple"

defines the man by pointing out a positive circumstance concerning him. But the attribute of "standing in front of the temple" is not essentially connnected with him, for it did not exist before he came there and will disappear the moment he moves towards me. If I say "Bring me that man *with the squint eye*", here also the adjectival phrase "with the squint eye" defines the man by pointing out another positive circumstance concerning him but the squint eye cannot be left behind when he is brought to me.

It will be now seen that the Adjectives (Viśēshana) are generally classifiable into :

(1) Negative or Distinctive, e. g. a *fearless* man, a village *five miles off*, an aeroplane *above the clouds*.

(2) Positive or Descriptive. This is divisible into two classes : (a) One denoting separable attributes (called *Upādhi*) e.g. the man *standing in front of the temple*, the house *on the top of which a crow is perching*, the book *which is the seventh in the shelf*. (b) The other denoting inseparable attributes (called Viśēshana) e. g. the man *with the squint eye*, the *brilliant* sun, the *two-storeyed* house.

The reader will note that of all the above classes it is only the last class (the inseparable descriptive) that really brings out the *essential* characteristic of the thing sought to be characterised and that, therefore, the term Viśēshana though generally used to indicate any adjective is specially appropriate only to that class. But, to avoid confusion, the Vedantī very often retains the word Viśēshana for all adjectives, and uses the word Lakshana for the descriptive attributes which are subdivided into *Tatastha Lakshana* (separable or temporary attributes) and *Svarūpa Lakshana* (inseparable or essential attributes).

Further, as stated before, it is the essence of an adjective that it must define the substantive effectively. If I say "Bring me those two men *with squint eyes*" and if it happens that there is nobody there with a squint eye, the adjective cannot possibly define at all. If it happens that all the men there and not only two of them have squint eyes, even then the adjective cannot help in picking out the two men wanted, for the attribute extends to more people than the intended two. If it happens that only one of the two men pointed out has a squint eye, the adjective is defective as it does not apply to both the men sought to be defined. In these three cases, the adjective ceases to function as a defining factor and is not worth the name of an adjective. These three infirmative circumstances which take away the worth of an adjective are respectively called *Asambhava* (when the attribute is not to be found in the object sought to be characterised by it), *Ativyāpti* (when the attribute is common to that object and others) and *Avyāpti* (when it does not apply to all the objects sought to be characterised). These three defects of non-existing, extending too far and extending too little, must be absent from any true adjective.

Having thus in a way tried to understand the function of an adjective, we shall now consider in what ways it characterises an object. Our knowledge of any particular subject is derived in any one of these four ways:

(1) We recognise the *Category* of a thing e. g., a *Brāhmaṇa* girl, a *human* being, a *tiger* cub, a *wooden* chair.

(2) We note its *Quality*, e. g., a *handsome* boy, a *tiny* plant, a *white* wall, a *bulky* book.

(3) We observe its *Functioning* e. g., a *racing* horse, a *weeping* child, a *generous* woman, a *fighting* cock.

(4) We recognise its *Relationship* to something already known to us, e. g., the son *of* So and so, the owner *of* a

particular house, the member *for* a particular ward, the water *in* the pot.

The function of an adjective, therefore, is to draw our attention to a thing by reference to Category (*Jāti*), Quality (*Guṇa*), Function (*Kriyā*) or Relationship (*Sambandha*). It will now be clear that if two words are in apposition with each other and if the apposition is of the adjectival variety one of those words must necessarily bring out the Category, Quality, Function or Relationship of the other.

3. IMPOSITION

When a particular thing is taken to be something else than what it really is and both the things are put in apposition to each other, the apposition is called an "Imposed" apposition. A thing may be taken to be something else either because of a deliberate volition on our part or because of an involuntary mistake. The deliberate volition may be the result of a command in the Śāstras or due to our own initiative. The involuntary mistake may be due to a defect in the perceiver himself, or in the perceived object, or in the instrument of perception. We shall proceed to consider all these in some detail.

(A) *Voluntary Imposition:* When a thing is deliberately taken to be something else, we are quite conscious of the existing distinctness between those two things, but are content to ignore that distinctness for the present. "Suppose $a+b=c$" is a possible suggestion only when we are perfectly conscious, that $a+b$ is not always c. Nobody can ask us to *suppose* that $5+1=6$ (for it is always true) or that $5+1=7$ (for it is always false). For any kind of supposition of identity between two things, the distinctness between them must be apparent and the identity extraneously imposed. The identity is not a perceived *fact* but is only notional. The notion may be engendered in us either because the Śāstra

wants us to entertain that notion or because we ourselves choose to do so.

(a) *THE ŚASTRIC IMPOSITION*

The Śāstric Imposition is given the name of *Upāsanā* or Contemplation. It is ordinarily sub-divided into four varieties :

(i) *Sampat* : When a small thing is asked to be contemplated upon as a very big thing by reason of a *characteristic* (Guna) common to them both, e. g. "Contemplate on the Mind as Brahman for the Mind is verily unlimited like Brahman itself". If a petty village officer is shown the respect due to a King, he may be moved to do what all he can for us, but certainly no King will be pleased if he is shown the respect due to a petty officer. Similarly, a big thing is never asked to be contemplated upon as a small thing, though the principle of Imposition is present there also.

(ii) *Āropa :* When a thing is directed to be contemplated upon as another by reason of some *relationship* (Sambandha) between them,e.g.,"Reverence to the Guru's sandals will free you from bondage". Here the Guru and the sandals are treated as one and worship is directed to the sandals, though intended for the Guru who has worn those sandals.

(iii) *Samvarga :* When a thing is asked to be treated as identical with another by reason of a *function* (Kriyā), which is common to both e.g., "Prāna is verily Vāyu the Cosmic Wind, for does it not draw into itself all (activities of the senses)". Here there is a similarity of function, though the function of Prāṇa is purely individual while that of the other is cosmic. Still this similarity is availed of by the Śāstra for prescribing a contemplation of Prāṇa as Vāyu the Cosmic Wind.

(iv) *Adhyāsa:* When a thing is asked to be considered as another, not because of any apparent or expressed reason, but only because the *Śāstra so wills* it, e.g., "O Gautama, woman is verily the sacrificial fire." Here no similarity of quality or function or relationship is assigned as the reason for the contemplation directed by the Śāstra.

All these four varieties of Upāsanā have for their object a thing external to the Self and the Śāstra directs us to look upon it at the time of the Upāsanā as a Dēvatā or something higher than what it really is. These *external* Upāsanās are all generally known as *Prateeka Upāsanās.* Sometimes this term is limited to the last three varieties only. Besides these four kinds, there is another kind of Upāsanā where the Self of the devotee is itself directed to be superimposed upon by the conception of a Dēvatā or Brahman, that is, he is asked to contemplate on his own Self as a particular Dēvatā or Brahman. In this case, no object external to the Self is needed and the Upāsanā is known as *Aham-graha*, "the Grasp of the *I*".

We may mention in this connection that sometimes the term Prateeka Upāsanā is applied to those kinds wherein predominance is given to the *object* before us, e.g., when a pious Brāhmana is looked upon as a Pitṛi Dēvatā at the time of a Śrāddha, and the term Sampat Upāsanā is applied to the other kinds wherein prominence is attached to the *thing imposed* on the object before us, e.g., when Vishnu is worshipped through a Sālagrāma stone. For practical purposes, however, it is not necessary to bear these fine distinctions in mind and it will be sufficient if we consider Upāsanā under two main heads :

(1) *Prateeka*, where the object on which the superimposition is made is external to our Self and (2) *Aham-graha* where it is the Self itself.

(b) *THE NON-ŚĀSTRIC IMPOSITION*

The Non-Śāstric Voluntary Imposition falls under two heads, Secondary and Conventional.

(1) *Secondary:* When a thing is taken to be the same as another by reason of some attribute which is common to both. As attributes are, as pointed out before, of four kinds the Secondary Imposition is also of four kinds; e.g., when we point to a monkey and say that it is a Hanumān, we say so because it is of the same species (Jāti) as Hanumān; when we talk of a bold man as a lion, we give prominence to his prowess (a Guṇa); when we call the village doctor the Dhanvantari of the place, we refer to the common attribute of doctoring (a Kriyā); when we say of a minister that he is verily the King himself, we draw attention to their close intimacy (a Sambandha). The poetic metaphors and all other conceits wherein, at the will of the author, something is described as another thing, e.g., the face as a lotus or the Moon, all come under this head of Secondary Imposition.

(2) *Conventional:* When a thing is taken to be another, not because of any attribute, but only because of a convention old or new that it shall be so done—e.g., when we point to a dot in a map of India and say "Here is Calcutta", the dot is certainly not Calcutta but we desire that for certain purposes it shall be so taken. When I pronounce the word "Cow", the sound has nothing to do with the animal and yet those who know English have come to associate that sound with that animal. The curve *6* has no intrinsic connection with the numeral six and yet we use it whenever we want to express that numeral in writing. All these are as much "Conventional" as the latest shorthand newly invented to represent sounds.

(B) *Involuntary Imposition*: Here a thing is taken to be something else but not with our will power. In fact, we are not conscious that there are two distinct things and that we are taking one for the other. As the will and the consciousness are absent so far as the superimposition is concerned, we call it involuntary and a mistake. In all cases of perception, there are three essential factors involved. They are the perceiving subject, the perceived object and the instrument of perception. Mistaken super-imposition results from a defect in any of these three; e.g., (i) When a boy is a coward and subject to fears, he sees a ghost in vacant air; (ii) when a rope is hidden in semi-darkness, it is easily mistaken for a snake; (iii) when the eye is jaundiced, it sees white as yellow. Unfortunately for us, there neither is, nor can be, a perfect perceiver, or a perfect perceived or a perfect instrument of perception, in the entire universe. There is bound to be, therefore, some kind of mistake or other, some kind of super-imposition or other, every moment of our existence. The kinds and the intensity of super-imposition may differ with each individual, but it is only a question of variety or degree and not of any difference in the existence of the mistake itself. The mistake subsists and is bound to subsist as long as the perceiver and the perceived are both limited and, therefore, in need of a process of perception to connect them; when they transcend that need and merge into a common entity which knows no differentiation and is beyond all kinds of limitation, then only will they be perfect and be freed from any necessity to use any instrument of perception. But it so happens that the moment such a perfect state is reached the perceiver and the perceived cease to remain any longer *as such*. The aim of the Śāstra is to help us on to such a stage of perception where there will be no need for any process of perceiving and the Śāstra helps us by telling us how to gradually refine

and purify these three factors, the perceiver, the perceived and the instrument of perception, so that ultimately they may all become perfect and beyond the possibility of any mistake, from the most insignificant to the most serious.

4. THE VANISHING EQUATION

The fourth kind of apposition namely, the Vanishing, may now be taken up for consideration.

When we were considering the Involuntary Imposition, we pointed out that at the time of the mistaken perception we were not conscious of the existence of *two* distinct things, the real thing perceived and the imaginary thing imposed upon it by the mistake. In fact, we saw only *one* thing the imposed one, without any consciousness that it was only an imposed thing and not the real thing. In other words, the real thing had disappeared from our perception for all practical purposes and its place been taken by the super-imposed object. If true perception is to be had, the process will have to be reversed; the imaginary thing must be made to disappear and its place taken by the real thing. That is, false perception must be replaced by true perception. The *seeming* object must vanish from our view and the *existing* object must present itself before us. Both in false perception and in true perception, only *one* thing is perceived at the time. Strictly speaking, the two things do not simultaneously exist so as to admit of being placed in apposition to each other. But in false perception, the real thing does not cease to be, but is only screened *for the time being;* if it really ceased to be, there would not be any basic substratum on which the seeming thing might appear and there could not possibly be any seeming at all. In true perception, however, the false thing, which till that moment seemed to

be, disappears *for ever;* the false thing is not merely screened but is completely destroyed and ceases to exist.

A thing is usually said to be destroyed when it ceases to be *as such;* but the destruction of the false or seeming thing is not of that kind. From clay, a pot is made. It exists because of the clay. And when it is broken into pieces, it again becomes clay. A broken pot does not vanish into nothingness, but only merges into its material cause, the clay. Similarly, whenever anything decays and dies, it becomes decomposed into the elements which composed it and becomes merged into those elements in the external world. It does not cease to be absolutely, for its substance continues to exist though now in the causal form. This kind of destruction which means only a cessation of the effect form and a resumption of the causal form is called *Nāśa* (Disappearance). A rope string appears as a snake. It may be said that the snake springs from the rope, has its existence in it and ultimately disappears into it when the mistake is realised. But it does not disappear into the rope as the broken pot did into the clay. There is not merely a change from the state of effect to the state of the cause. It ceases to be altogether. And this cessation is absolute. A real snake does exist before it dies. But the false snake does not exist even when it lives; the false snake, therefore, does not merely cease to be seen or merely cease to be, but ceases to *have been* also. Its non-existence does not extend to the future only, as the non-existence of the broken pot does, but it includes the past, the present and the future. Its disappearance therefore is absolute. This kind of destruction which does away with a thing altogether by exposing its falsity even when it seems to be is known by the name of *Bādha* (Vanishing).

An equation is said to be a vanishing equation when one of the factors equated vanishes, in the sense we have

indicated above, the moment the equation is realised. In ordinary equations, the evaluated essence or substance of the factors on either side of the sign of equality is seen to be the same, but in the vanishing equation, one of the factors when attempted to be evaluated eludes our grasp and is seen to be really valueless. "The snake is the rope" is a typical example of the vanishing equation. The rope is not perceived when the snake is seen. The snake ceases to appear when the rope is perceived. The connecting predicate *is* is ,therefore, really used to equate two things which do not and cannot simultaneously exist. The realisation of the snake's identity with the rope destroys the snake altogether and leaves only the rope existing. It is not any realisation of the identity of "substance" in the snake and in the rope; but it is the realisation of the substance rope and of the absence of substance in the snake. The snake does not disappear into or merge into the rope but vanishes altogether. It vanishes not only for ever afterwards but is seen to have never existed even when it seemed to be.

CHAPTER XV

THE VEDIC EQUATION

1. ITS NATURE

Now we shall proceed to consider under which kind of equation falls the Vedic enunciation which equates the Soul or Matter with Brahman. As practically the same considerations apply whether we consider the equation that the Soul is Brahman or whether we consider the other equation that the Universe is Brahman, we propose to deal mainly with the former for facility of treatment.

We can summarily reject the Synonymous Equation, for the mere enumeration of synonymous terms has its legitimate place only in a dictionary and certainly not in the Veda which aims at teaching us eternal truths and not mere words. Further, we know as a matter of fact from our daily experience that the Soul, limited as we feel it is to our bodies and limited as we feel it is in its capacities in the fields of knowledge and enjoyment, *cannot* be the same as Brahman, the Universal Self, with its infinite knowledge and Bliss. The words "Soul" and "Brahman" cannot therefore be synonymous terms both signifying the same thing.

We can also summarily reject the Involuntary Imposition among the two kinds of Imposed Equation, Voluntary and Involuntary, for it is based upon mistake. It cannot be

the object of the Veda, which professes to give us true knowledge, to teach us an equation which is based upon mistake. Of the Voluntary kinds of Imposition, we may leave out of account also the non-Śāstric variety (derivative or conventional), for we are concerned with the equation enunciated by the Veda, the Supreme Śāstra.

2. SUPPOSITION

Thus the only possible categories of equation under which the equation "The Soul is Brahman" can come are (1) the Adjectival (2) The Śāstric Voluntarily Imposed and (3) the Vanishing. There are some schools of thought in India which say that it comes under the second category; that is, they interpret the sentence "The Soul is Brahman" as meaning a Vedic command "Contemplate on the Soul as Brahman". Such contemplation is justifiable as *sampat*, as there is the common characteristic of consciousness in both the Soul and Brahman or as *Āropa*, as there is relationship of the part and the whole between them or as *Samvarga*, since the function of knowing or experiencing is found in both (p.97), or as mere *Adhyāsa* on the ground that the Śāstra, the Supreme Veda, so commands us without giving any reason (p. 98). They further add that this kind of contemplation yields extraordinary merit.

The Advaitī, however, declines to accept this interpretation. He points out that there is no justification for reading into a plain enunciation of the *fact* of identity between the Soul and Brahman a non-existing command to *suppose* something which is not true. The reason why the category of Involuntary Imposition was discarded was that the resultant perception being based on mistake was not true. The mental conception, the result of a deliberate volition that a particular thing shall be taken for another, may not be based upon a mistake but is nevertheless equally

untrue. It cannot be the province of the Veda to enunciate as a proposition, or as a guide to spiritual progress, a deliberately untrue statement. Further the command "*Suppose* A is B" is unworthy of the highest Pramāna known as the Veda. If A *is* B, there is no need for any supposition; if A *is not* B, even the Veda has no right to ask us to suppose anything that is false. In either way, the importation of any supposition in the unambiguous sentence "The Soul is Brahman" is absolutely unjustified. But have we not heard of the Vedic injuctions asking us to contemplate on the Mind as Brahman, on the Brāhmaṇa before you as a God, and so on? No doubt, we have. But in all those cases there are definite words denoting the supposition. Further, the results obtained by such supposition for the time being, partaking as it does of the nature of a mental act, are ephemeral, being the effects of a cause. The perception of a thing, though it may resemble other mental processes in some respects, depends upon the thing perceived and not upon the volition of the perceiver. In obedience to the dictates of the Śāstra, you may look upon a Brāhmaṇa as a God; in disobedience of it, you may look upon him as anti-God; ignoring it, you may decline to look upon him as anything else. That is, in cases of supposition or superimposition, it is quite within your power to do it, to decline to do it or to do it otherwise, according to the manner in which you choose to exercise your will.

But if there is a pot before your very eyes and you are asked to see it, it is *not* within your option to see it, it is *not* within your option not to see it, for the pot will, without your leave or permission, impress itself on the retina of your eye and be seen in spite of you; nor is it within your power to see it otherwise than as a pot. This is the essential difference between expressions like "The Brāhmaṇa is a God" and expressions like "This is a pot". The former asks us to

suppose; the latter asks us to *know*. The mental concept that results from the former is false, while the mental concept that results from the latter is true. The Advaitī asks, why should we interpret the Veda as commanding a false mental concept when it is quite possible to interpret it in a straight forward manner as enunciating a true proposition?

There are some other thinkers who agree with the Advaitī in pointing out that the Soul cannot be required to be contemplated upon as Brahman in any of the kinds of Voluntary Imposition mentioned above, as the soul is not an object on which something else can be imposed. They say that the Soul cannot be a *Prateeka* of Brahman and that *Prateeka Upāsanā* of Brahman through the Soul is an impossibility, as the Soul being the contemplater cannot be at the same time the object contemplated upon. That is, the Soul being the subject in the act of contemplation cannot be an object. They therefore say that the subjective imposition, called *Ahamgraha Upāsanā* mentioned above, is the only logical kind of Upāsanā possible when the Self is required to be contemplated upon as Brahman. The Advaitī fully endorses this opinion so far as it goes, but refutes the proposition that expressions like "The Soul is Brahman" prescribe any contemplation at all. Contemplation, whether objective or subjective, is only contemplation and not knowledge. Any mental concept, therefore, obtained by contemplation of whichever kind does not and cannot correspond to truth. Truth has to be *known* and *not conceived*. Such contemplation may yield extraordinary merit, but is incompetent to lead to true knowledge which alone can dispense Avidyā, the prime cause of all mis-equations. The Advaitī therefore vetoes the possibility of the equation of the Soul with Brahman coming under the category of Śāstric Voluntary Imposition also.

3. FUNCTION OF ATTRIBUTES

When dealing with the Adjectival Equation, we pointed out that of the two words which are in apposition one must bring out the Category, the Quality, the Function or the Relationship of the other. If in the sentence "The Soul is Brahman" the equation is of the adjectival variety, there are two alternatives open to us to consider. We may take the Soul as the substantive and Brahman as the adjective or take Brahman as the substantive and the Soul as the adjective. We shall consider the first alternative first.

If the word "Brahman" denoting the characteristic of being Brahman qualifies the word "Soul", in what way does it define the Soul? The word "Brahman" has no negative significance and it cannot therefore come under the class of distinctive adjectives as in "A senseless fellow". Its significance is, on the other hand, quite positive as it means "Big" or Great". It can therefore be only a descriptive adjective which brings out an attribute attached to the thing sought to be described by it. As pointed out before, the attribute so denoted may be either temporary as in "The man in front of the Temple", or essentially inseparable, as in "The man with the squint eye". It is impossible to grant that the Veda professing to teach us the highest truth uses the adjective Brahman only to draw our attention to a *temporary* attribute of the Soul, in other words, that the Veda wants to tell us that the Soul is *sometimes* Big, a proposition which does not help us in the least to realise the essential nature of the Soul. It may be necessary in the initial stages of enquiry to draw our attention to passing attributes. For example, we say "Look at the man with the red cap. He is the thief". As soon as the man is noted, the red cap loses its value and he will be caught even though he throws off the cap immediately. The

red cap is not an essential attribute of the thief, though it may go a long way in helping us to pick him out from a crowd. "The man with the red cap" is not a definition of that man, true for all time. Any definition given by the Veda, the highest of Pramāṇas, must be true and capable of enduring for all time. "The Soul is Brahman" cannot, therefore, be taken as meaning that the Soul is Big (or Great) or will become Big (or Great) under certain circumstances or for a particular time. To import such a limited significance into that sentence is practically to deny the status of eternal truth to the Vedic statements. The only reasonable and logical way of interpreting the sentence is to make it mean that the characteristic of being Big (or Great) is an *essential* inseparable attribute of the Soul.

Taking "Brahman" as the substantive and the word "Soul" as the adjective, we shall have to reject, for reasons similar to those stated above, the possibility of the latter functioning as a negative or temporary attribute. The word "Soul" therefore must be taken as bringing out an essential inseparable attribute of Brahman. The word "Soul" is used to denote the subjective conciousness in us all. When such a word is used as an adjective of Brahman as in "The Soul is Brahman", the only way of interpreting this sentence, treating Brahman as the substantive, is to make it mean that Brahman has as its essential attribute the characteristic of being subjectively concious.

Thus, taking the Soul as the substantive, we get for its characteristic the quality of being *Big* when we equate Brahman adjectively with it. Taking Brahman as the substantive, we get for its characteristic the quality of being *Conscious* when we equate the Soul adjectively with it. We shall consider the same matter in a different way.

4. MUTUAL QUALIFICATION

The Soul means the Subjectively Conscious Being limited to a particular body.

Brahman means the Objectively Big Being pervading the entire Universe.

When we say, therefore, that the Soul = Brahman, we virtually say:

The Subjectively Conscious Being limited to a particular Body = The Objectively Big Being pervading the entire Universe.

It is an elementary proposition that two things which can be characterised by exactly opposite attributes cannot be equated with each other. There must be, therefore, some method of understanding this Vedic equation without violating this elementary proposition. One cannot be a man, and a lion at the same time; "Man" and "Lion" are two mutually exclusive conceptions which can not with any truth be grafted into a single entity. But we do very often say "The Man is a Lion". How do we use that sentence and how do we understand it? We do not relegate that sentence to the category of false statements, but take trouble to understand it rightly, if only in deference to the intelligence of the person who speaks it. If the same deference is extended to the Veda, we must be able to find out its real import. The Man in question is a strong and bold being of the human species. The Lion is a strong and bold being of the animal species. When these two are equated, we find that the human-ness of the former and the animal-ness of the latter, being inconsistent with each other and mutually exclusive, stand in the way of our realising the equation. But, as we are not on that ground prepared to throw the equation over-board but want to retain it and make some sense out of it, we adopt the simple and straightforward

expedient of *ignoring* the inconsistent attributes and limiting our attention to the elements present in both the factors on either side of the equation. That is, we leave out the human-ness and the lion-ness which contradict each other and cannot therefore co-exist, and equate instead the strength and boldness of the Man in question with the strength and boldness of a Lion.

Similarly in the equation, *The Soul = Brahman*, or rather in the amplified equation, the *Subjectively* Conscious Being *limited to a particular Body* = the *Objectively* Big Being *pervading the entire Universe*, we find that the characteristic of *Being* is common in both, that the subjectivity of the one is inconsistent with the objectivity of the other, and that the individuality of the one is inconsistent with the universality of the other. If we therefore *ignore* these inconsistent characteristics of the factors on either side of the equation, we reduce that equation to this:

CONSCIOUS BEING = BIG BEING

Here the element of Being is common to both and there is no necessary contradiction between Consciousness and Bigness. The equation so reduced tells us that the Soul refined into a mere Conscious Being, unrelated to or undefined by any particular body, is Big and that Brahman refined into a mere Big Being, freed from any tinge of objectivity, is Conscious. These two truths cannot, by any amount of experience or reasoning on our part, be ever known or realised by us and we do want therefore the Veda, the highest Pramāṇa, to enunciate them for our benefit.

CHAPTER XVI

KINDS OF SIGNIFICANCE

1. THE LITERAL

Indian thinkers in dealing with the significance of words and sentences mention that it is twofold : (1) *Śakya*—Literal, e.g., when we call a lion a lion. (2) *Lakshya*—Derivative, e g., when we call a man a lion.

Some of these thinkers, especially the Ālankārikas, mention a third and finer significance which they call *Vyangya*—Implication, e.g. instead of saying that a woman has a beautifully curved nose just above her lips, the poet may choose to say "Here is a pretty parrot perched on a petal of rose". The Vedāntī, however, sees no reason to assign this any place outside the second class mentioned above and, therefore, recognises only the two classes of significance, namely the Literal and the Derivative. The Literal meaning of any word is the primary meaning which is assigned to it by the language to which it belongs and which is, therefore, given the first place in the meanings mentioned in any dictionary of that language.

2. THE DERIVATIVE

The Derivative is necessarily a departure from the Literal. As pointed out before in another context, deviations from truth, which is ever one, are infinite in number; similarly

the derivative significances are therefore infinite in number, depending as they do on the extent of distance or variation from the "Literal" meaning; but being only "derivative" they can never be absolutely disconnected with the literal significance, though very often they may be very much stretched and strained and may even seem absurd. In spite of the infinite variety that is thus possible among derivative significances, it is possible to analyse them under three headings according as the literal meaning is—

(1) *Given up*, e.g., Banaras is situated on the *Gangā*. Here all the words in this sentence except the last are used in their literal meaning. If we interpret the last word Gangā also as meaning the stream of water known as the Gangā, the sentence will become untrue as no town can be situated *on* a stream of water. We have necessarily therefore to give up the literal meaning and substitute in its stead the meaning "the *banks* of the Gangā". We cannot substitute there the banks of any other river; we deviate only slightly from the literal meaning but all the same we do give it up.

(2) *Not Given up*, e.g., The *Red* is winning the race. Here also all the words except the word "Red" are used in their literal meaning. If we interpret that word also as meaning the colour known as Red, the sentence will become meaningless as no colour can ever by itself run or win a race. We have necessarily therefore to add to the literal meaning and substitute instead the meaning "the red horse". We cannot substitute there the horse of any other colour. Here again we slightly deviate from the literal meaning but unlike the previous instance we do *not* give up the literal meaning but only add to it.

(3) *Given up and Not Given up;* e.g., The *ring* is pure gold. Here again all the words in this sentence except the word "Ring" are used in their literal meaning. It could seem that the word Ring also is used only in its literal meaning. It only means, however, a small round thing

capable of being worn and has in fact no connection with gold. In the sentence, the ring is round, it is used in the literal sense but not in the previous sentence. The attribute of being pure gold has nothing to do with the ringness. In fact, that attribute appertains only to the substance, the material substratum, which is for the time in the shape of a ring. Here, therefore, to make the sentence absolutely correct, we analyse the ring into two factors, the ring-shape and the ring-substance. For the purpose of realising the truth of the equation formulated by the sentence, "The ring is pure gold", we have to ignore or give up the former factor and to retain the latter. That is, of the two factors which go to make up the conception of the Ring before us we give up one, the temporary or seeming factor, and we do not give up the other, the permanent or substantial factor.

The reader will now recognise that *if* we take it that the word "Soul" literally means a Subjectively Conscious Being limited to a particular body and that the word "Brahman" literally means the Objectively Big Being pervading the entire Universe, the two words can never be equated with each other as their denotations are mutually contradictory and inconsistent with each other. The literal meanings therefore have to be deviated from. That is, derivative significances have to be assigned to these two words. We saw before that these derivative significances which are capable of being equated with each other were arrived at, not by discarding the literal meanings in their entirety, nor by adding thereto, but by eliminating the contradictory and inconsistent factors and by retaining such of the factors as do not contradict each other. That is, the derivative significances of the words Soul and Brahman in the sentence equating them with each other belong to the third class of derivative significances above mentioned, namely, where the literal meaning is partly given up and partly not given up.

3. DIFFERENT STANDPOINTS

If, however, we take it that the literal meaning of the word Soul is the "Conscious Being *devoid of all limitations*" and that the literal meaning of the word Brahman is the "Big Being *devoid of all objectivity*", both the words, Soul and Brahman, signify really the same Entity and can therefore be equated with each other practically as synonyms. The equation is of the adjectival variety, only when we decline to treat such refined significances as literally denoted by these words.

There is a third alternative possible, that is, where we do not assign derivative significances to both the factors on either side of the equation and where we do not assign literal significances either to them both. Such is the case where we assign derivative significance to *one* of the factors and assign literal significance to the other. In trying to understand the equation, "the Ring is Gold", in an earlier context, we analysed the Ring and found it to consist of two factors, the ring shape and the ring-material and we noted that the equation was true only if we limit the significance of the word Ring to the latter factor. If, instead of recognising the *two* factors as coming within the range of literal significance, we take it that only the ring shape is literally denoted by the word ring and if we yet seek to understand the equation, the Ring is Gold, the moment we make such an attempt the ring-ness, that is, the shape of the ring, must necessarily fade from our view. That is, when the goldness of the ring is perceived, the ring-shape becomes meaningless. In other words, the Ring, limited as its significance is to the shape, has to disappear or vanish when it is sought to be equated with gold.

In this method of exposition, the equation becomes one of the Vanishing variety. If we assign to the word Soul the significance of a Conscious Entity limited to a particular

body as its literal meaning and if we are averse to delet any portion of this significance from the literal meaning of the word Soul, we must grant that, if the equation of the Soul with Brahman has to be realised as a truth, the Soul must disappear or vanish at the time of that realisation, just as the ring shape disappears from our view when the goldness is realised. Here again the reader may be reminded that, though the ring shape disappears from our view, it does not melt into nothingness but is only lost or merged in the ring substance which is gold and that, similarly, though the individual Soul disappears or vanishes at the time of the realisation of its equation with Brahman, it does not melt into nothingness but is only lost or merged in its substance which is Brahman. The Nirvāṇa of the Advaitī is not a snuffing out of the Soul into the Limitless Void of Nothingness; it is, on the other hand, freeing it of all limitation and restoring it to the limitless Fullness of Being.

Thus we see that the equation, The Soul is Brahman, falls under the Adjectival variety or under the Vanishing variety, according as we assign particular literal significances to the terms Soul and Brahman. Some thinkers prefer to include it in the Adjectival variety and some others in the Vanishing. Arguments are not wanting to show why they prefer a particular line of exposition but Śrī Sureśvarāchārya, the worthy disciple of Śrī Śankarāchārya, makes it clear that *any* line of exposition is admissible if it helps the student to understand rightly the truth taught to him. After all, the difference is only in the method of treatment of the subject and not in the ultimate teaching. Truth, the goal of all teaching and of all life, is ever one, but the methods of approach to it have to differ or vary according to the varying distances which separate each one of us from it and according to the varying deviations which we, every one of us, have to set right before we can enter the straight path towards it. That is why various courses of training are necessary even in the field of knowledge.

CHAPTER XVII

THE CONQUEST OF MĀYĀ

1. TRUTH ABSOLUTE AND RELATIVE

The reader who has carefully read through the foregoing pages will have realised how the Advaiti understands the Vedānta texts which equate the Individual Soul or the Universe with Brahman. To recapitulate what has been stated till now, we may briefly say that it is the aim of the Veda to make us all realise that in essence we are one with the One Reality which is given the name of Sat (Being) or Brahman (Big) and that in essence the transient world of Names and Forms is also one with that Reality.

The identity of the substance between the Soul and Brahman is not realised and cannot be realised as, and as long as, individuality and the resultant limitedness of various sorts are attributed to the former. Similarly, the essential oneness of substance between the Universe and Brahman is not and cannot be realised as, and as long as, we attach any significance to the Name and Form of the former. Our clothing the Soul with individuality and our attaching value to Name and Form in the universe effectively prevent us from realising the inherent and essential identity. When a ring and a necklace are both placed before us, we do not ordinarily stop with not recognising the identity of the

substance in them both, but actually say and act as if they were quite different from each other. Simply because of the undeniable fact that the substance gold is the same in both, we cannot wear the ring around the neck or the necklace on the finger. The recognition of the identity of substance does not and cannot disturb or make meaningless the perceptible distinctness in the sphere of practical usefulness. Nor can the fact that the ring is worn on the finger and the necklace around the neck prevent the recognition of the identity of substance between the two.

It is true that the energy bottled up in an atom of matter is enough to blow up the earth but that does not prevent us from moving about in the world or gulping those atoms in the form of food. It is a mistake, therefore, to suppose that the Advaitī is a mere dreamer or an abstract thinker. He is as much in the world as anybody else and is as much alive to its beauties and drawbacks as the most sensuous of the worldly men. Only the Advaitī's vision is clearer and he sees things in their proper perspective; he is never in the ecstasy of delight, nor obsessed by the gloom of despair, at the sight of anything or the happening of any event in the universe. Though he knows that Truth is ever One, he realises that there is a practical distinction that obtains between the Absolute Truth of Brahman, true and unchanging for all time, and the Relative Truth of the Individual Soul or the Universe, true and subsisting throughout the period of their seeming distinct existence from Brahman, but *no* longer than that. The Absolute Truth is given the name of *Pāramārthika*, the Ultimate Real, and the Relative Truth is known as *Vyāvahārika*, the Work-a-day Practical. The still more transient truth which appears and disappears even during the currency of the Vyāvahārika state, e.g., the snake seen in

the rope, the ghost in vacant air, dreams and nightmares, is known as *Prātibhāsika*, the merely Seeming.

The Advaitī points out that, just as the dreamer for the purpose of realising the transient nature of dreams has to wake into the Vyāvahārika state leaving behind the Prātibhāsika, the experiencer of the Vyāvahārika universe has to wake into the Pāramārthika state leaving behind the Vyāvahārika. This is only another way of saying that, to realise the Absolute Truth, we must learn to dissociate individuality from the Soul and to dissociate Name and Form from the Universe. In other words, we must learn to equate the Soul with the Limitless Brahman on the subjective side and to equate the Universe with the Formless Absolute on the objective side and realise the essential identity of Substance of all these three factors, the Soul, the Universe and God, which seem to exist as distinct factors till such realisation is had in all its fulness.

2. MISTAKES INFINITE

It has been stated before that the non-equation of the Soul with Brahman precedes and is responsible for the mis-equation of the Soul with the Body or other limiting factors. It is the non-perception of the rope in the thing before us that gives rise to the false perception of the snake in it. It was also pointed out that non-perception being a negative phenomenon admits of no varieties in itself and that it is therefore uniform, while false perceptions, the positive deviations from truth, are of infinite variety corresponding to the infinite things for which the true thing may be mistaken. That is, though the antecedent and causal non-perception is one and uniform, its potentiality to give rise to false perceptions is infinite. A lump of clay has inherent in it the capacity to take any shape. It may

become a pot, a plate, a cup, a ball, and so on. Its potentiality to take shape is infinite. If it is given the shape of a pot, it may be true that the pot *as such* can not any longer put on the shape of a plate, a cup or a ball, but it cannot be denied that the capacity of the clay in the pot to put on any such shape still inheres in it and is not at all lost. It may be urged that the clay that has become a pot has lost the capacity to become a pot again though it may retain the capacity to become anything else. But this is forgetting the fact that no power can be said to be lost when from being potential it becomes kinetic. The power is there, but only finds expression in a different manner.

Similarly, there are infinite possibilities of false perception or mis-equation in the causal non-perception or non-equation. So far as the Soul is concerned, the antecedent or causal *Non*-equation with Brahman is known as *Avidyā* and the resultant many-sided *Mis*-equation with other things is known as *Adhyāsa.* Viewed as a Capacity of the Soul itself, Avidyā, the Potential Power of Non-equation, is given the name of *Āvaraṇa Śakti,* the Screening Power; Adhyāsa, the Kinetic Power of Mis-equation, is then called *Vikshēpa Śakti,* the Distracting Power. Similarly, considering the case of the objective universe of Matter, the antecedent or causal *Non*-equation with Brahman is known as *Māyā* and the resultant many-sided *Mis*-equation with names and forms is known as *Adhayārōpa.* Viewed as a Capacity of Brahman itself, this Māyā, the Potential Power of Non-equation, is conceived of as *its Āvaraṇa Śakti*; and this Adhyārōpa, the Kinetic Power of Mis-equation, is conceived of as *its Vikshēpa Śakti.*

The problem will be further simplified if instead of assuming a Potential Power of Non-equation of the Soul and another Potential Power of Non-equation for the Universe,

we grant the existence of a *single* Potential Power of Non-equation which gets the name of Avidyā when considered in relation to the Soul and which gets the name of Māyā when considered in relation to the Universe. Similarly, the problem will be equally simplified if, instead of assuming a Kinetic Power of Mis-equation for the Soul and another Kinetic Power of Mis-equation for the Universe, we postulate a *single* Kinetic Power of Mis-equation which gets the name of Adhyāsa when considered in relation to the Soul and which gets the name of Adhyārōpa when considered in relation to the Universe.

Thus we arrive a a *Cosmic* Potential Power of Non-equation (Āvaraṇa Śakti) and at *Cosmic* Kinetic Power of Mis-equation (Vikshēpa Śakti). As already pointed out, the former is the causal or antecedent state and the latter is the effect or subsequent state; the fact that one is potential and the other kinetic cannot make any difference in their essential nature as Power. They are therefore not conceived of as two distinct Powers but only as a Single Cosmic Power which has two states, Potential and Kinetic. This Single Cosmic Power which is thus responsible for all non-equations and mis-equations, whether of the Soul or of the Universe, is also given the name of *Māyā* but, to distinguish it from the Prime Material Cause of the Universe of Names and Forms which also goes by that name, this is often called the *Parā Śakti*, the Supreme Power. She is the Mother of all that exists or seems to exist. She is responsible for all distinctions in the Universe and she it is that stands in the way of our realising the Oneness of Brahman.

3. TRANSCENDENCE

It is only the conquest of Her that can free us from all bondage and, as it were, restore us to our inherent state of perfect existence, knowledge and bliss. Lord Śrī Krishna

tells us in His sacred Song "They cross this Māyā who resort to *Me* only" (Gītā VII, 14). It becomes, therefore, necessary to know more about this Māyā and the method of transcending Her. In the preceding sentence, the Lord describes Her as "*My* Māyā divine and constituted by Guṇas (Qualities)" and adds that it is "very difficult to transcend Her". We are able to gather from these words that the relationship between the Lord and Māyā is that of the possessor and the possessed. He is the owner and She is His property. The owner of a house and the house are distinct entities and the relationship between them is not inherent in either of them but is brought about and subsists when, and only as long as, the sense of ownership inheres in the owner. Is the relationship between the Lord and Māyā similar to this? If it were, we would have to concede independent existence to Māyā and thereby negate the One-ness of Brahman. It is to prevent such an interpretation that She is said to be divine, that is, to partake of the nature of the Divine Lord Himself. How can a thing which is owned partake of the nature of the owner? This is possible only if that thing is inseparable or indistinguishable from the owner. If it is inseparable or indistinguishable from the owner, how can we call it a thing owned as distinct from the owner? A thing can be owned by another only if it is separable or distinguishable from that another. How then are we to understand the Lord's teaching? To make it intelligible, we have to say that Māyā is not separable from Brahman as she is said to be divine and we have to say that She is, at the same time, not inseparable from Brahman as she is "owned" by Brahman. This seeming contradiction in her nature is explained and solved by the definition of Her as "Constituted by Guṇas (Qualities)". She is, as it were, a Quality, a Faculty, a Capacity, a Power, an inseparable Attribute of Brahman.

4. NATURE OF POWER

Suppose a stranger comes to visit me and stays with me for some hours without speaking a word. Will it be possible for me to know his linguistic attainments or his capacity for singing? I can see his body and its movements but, unless he speaks or sings, I can know nothing of his capacity to speak or to sing. If he does talk in Tamil or sings a particular song, I can at once recognise his capacity to talk in Tamil or to sing that particular song; but I cannot on this single fact assume or deny his capacity to talk in any other language or to sing other songs. We see, therefore, that the capacity of any person is not capable of being perceived till it finds expression in a concrete and, therefore, a limited form and that the manifestation of that capacity in any particutar form does not and cannot exhaust all the possibilities of that capacity. When a capacity finds such an expression, the expression obviously emanates from the person having that capacity and lasts as long as he wills it and finally disappears in himself when he chooses to withdraw it. The expression, therefore, is only kinetic and limited external showing forth of the already existing potential, unlimited internal capacity inherent in that person. The capacity is perceived only when it finds concrete expression, but that expression is only an infinitesimal phase of that capacity. The expression is the perceptible proof of that capacity, but does not in the least define or exhaust it. The capacity exists as much when it does not express itself, as when it does. The power to sing is inherent in the singer and remains unperceived and indistinguishable from the singer when he does not choose to sing and becomes perceptible and distinguishable from him when he sings.

In view of its finding expression only at times, we have to grant that the singing capacity is not identical with the

singer; in view of the normal state of non-expression, we have to say that the capacity is not distinct from him. During the period of expression, it seems to have an existencc of its own distinct from the singer; even then, if the latter withdraws his will or life force, the singing will cease to exist. During the period of non-expression, it does not exist distinct from the singer. It is not a distinct real entity, for it cannot exist independently of the singer. It is not a mere abstraction, as it is felt and perceived by us in the stage of expression. The only way in which we can characterise it is to say of it that it is neither real like the singer nor unreal like the son of a barren woman. If it were real, it must sustain its existence for all periods of time, the past, the present and the future; if it were unreal, it can never make itself felt. The capacity has therefore to be included in a new and third category of things which are neither real nor unreal, in other words, of things which *seem* to be, but *are not.*

The Advaitī gives the name of *Anirvachanīya*, "Indescribable" to this class and defines it as *Sad-Asad-Vilakshaṇa*, distinct from the existing and from the non-existing. The Supreme Capacity, the Power known as Māyā, inherent in Brahman is equally, therefore, *Anirvachanīya*, Indescribable. She has no existence independent of Brahman and, therefore, does not effect its essential oneness. It finds expression in the creation, the maintenance and the dissolution of the universe and during that period of expression seems to have an existence distinct from Brahman; but the fact remains that, if Brahman, like the singer in the illustration, withdraws the will or life force, Māyā can do nothing to express Herself. Viewed as distinct from the Lord, She is His slave and has no independent will of Her own; viewed as indistinguishable from Him, She is even He and can have therefore

no independent will of Her own. She is in either view the "property" of God.

5. THE ESCAPE

It may be possible to escape the petty tyranny of the servants of a manor by giving them occasional tips but once this method of appeasing them is adopted, the drain on our purse is likely to increase with each occasion, as there is no limit to the capacity of servants to tease us if they make up their minds to do so. The only safe method of escaping for ever from their tyranny is to cultivate direct friendship with the master. If you do so, *they* will cease to tease you and, on the other hand, will try their best to please you; as you are intimate with their master. It is the same principle that the Lord wants us to adopt if we are serious about escaping the clutches of Māyā and Her creations. He asks us to resort to *Him only* and tells us that that is the only way and the sure way of transcending Māyā. As the escape from the tyranny of the servants is proportionate to our intimacy to the master, so is our transcendence of Māyā proportionate to our intimacy to the Lord. Absolute transcendence of Māyā is secured when the intimacy between us and the Lord reaches its climax or highest possibility.

The Advaitī, on the strength of the Vedānta teaching, tells us that the climax is reached when we realise our identity with Brahman, that is, when we actually perceive the truth of the equation between the Soul and Brahman. He tells us that it is a futile and endless task to make terms with Māyā and Her creations for Her capacity to mislead us is infinite and inconceivable. Even in the thought "I have transcended Māyā", there is Her potent seed and we will be unconsciously led away from the truth.

The feeling that nothing can tempt me contains in itself the seed of temptation. The ways of Māyā are inscrutable. Do not therefore waste your time in trying to understand them or to accomodate yourself to them. The more and more you try to do so, the further and further off will you be led away from the truth and the path leading to it. Leave Her therefore alone. Concentrate all your efforts in approaching Her Master, and persevere in that approach, till you secure not only proximity but even identity with Him. Thus does the Advaitī understand the Lord's teaching.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE REALISATION

1. FREE FORM LIMITATION

There is not a child who does not like sweetmeats made of sugar, but many a child who buys sugar artistically shaped as a cup or a rose hesitates before tasting it for fear of destroying the beautiful shape. As long as this fear subsists and he allows himself to be enamoured of the shape, he cannot enjoy the taste of sugar, though his desire for tasting it is as keen as ever. Strange as it may seem, many profound thinkers, even in India, share this child's mentality and are afraid to accept, and do shrink from, the Formless Absolute of Advaitī. Some would assign forms to their God even in His highest aspect and retain forms for themselves even in the highest realisation. How can there be perfect Bliss if there is no individuality? This is their usual objection. We have met many a friend who is unable to feel at home unless he at least glances over the headlines of a newspaper every day; and many newspapers have now a Sunday edition also to satisfy this craving. Such a friend may well ask us if any newspaper will be available in the ideal state of liberation and may well refuse to go there if our answer is in the negative. So long as he is of that mentality, he can not get admittance into that state. That is all. It is not possible to subscribe for, or promise to get him, a newspaper there merely for the

purpose of pleasing him. If it were possible, it would cease to be a perfect state. Some thinkers would clothe the liberated Souls not only with individuality but even with eyes and hands and in fact with everything with which we are accustomed to equate ourselves. Their state of salvation is but a replica of the world below. The Advaitī is not interested in denying and, in fact, even accepts the existence of such states, but denies that they are in any way states of liberation. The Souls there may be freer than we are; but they cannot be absolutely free so long as they are embodied or retain their individuality. *Everything* that makes for distinctness *must* go. It is only then that one is free from fear and bondage. The slightest sense of distinctness can have no place in the state of freedom. Time and Space cannot limit the liberated one, nor can there be any other Substance, be it God, to limit his existence. He realises that he is one with the God-substance, or rather, that he *is* the God-substance.

2. THE EQUATION REALISED

The Soul who has reached such a state of realisation loses all perception of his Self and of God and thereby transcends all need for equating them with each other. The factors on either side of the sign of equation lose and merge their significance in a single Reality and the sign of Equation therefore loses its significance and has no more purpose to serve. No sentence is needed to describe nor can one adequately describe the fullness of that experience which transcends all words and all expression. That experience again is neither a sense experience nor a mental concept, for the senses and the mind have no place or function there. It is mere Being, unalloyed and unqualified. It is mere Consciousness, unrelated to and undefined by anything to be known. It is mere Bliss, not dependent on

or defined by anything to be enjoyed. Even the words Being, Consciousness and Bliss become applicable to that state only when we have in our mental background things which do not have these characteristics. Strictly speaking, therefore, even these are but relative terms. In fact, all terms are relative. The only way, therefore, of describing that state is not to attempt to describe it. It defies all description, for description is a limitation and that state transcends all limitation. It is therefore expressed and expounded only by silence, silence of the tongue and silence of the mind. It knows no disturbance or differentiation. It is fullness. It is perfect equipoise. It is perfect peace. Such is the state promised for the perfect knower of the great equation.

3. OUR PRESENT POSITION

But it is necessary to pause a while and consider if any of us are in the least competent to aspire to such a realisation or even have a glimpse of it from a distance. It has been mentioned before that the lapse from the equation of the self with God first took the shape of non-equation of the Self with God and then developed into the grosser *mis*-equation of the Self with not-self (including therein the world, the mind, the senses and the body). It has also been mentioned that the return to the true equation, being in the nature of a reverse process, has to concern itself first with the consequences that we have brought on ourselves by the several kinds of mis-equation to which we have succumbed hitherto; secondly, gradually attenuating and ultimately breaking asunder the mis-equation; and thirdly, approximating to and finally realising the perfect equation of the Self with God. To these three stages in the Ascent to God, respectively aiming at the annulment of the consequences of Mis-equation (which consequences we called

Mala or Dirt), at the conquest of the varied Mis-equations (which we called Vikshēpa), and at the awaking from the sleep of Non-equation, (which we called Āvaraṇa), the Sāstra gives the name of Karma (Action), Bhakti (Devotion) and Jñāna (Knowledge) respectively.

It may be stated without the slightest fear of contradiction that the dirt, that has accumulated over our heads and around our hearts from time beginningless and that we are still allowing to accumulate at every moment of our present existence, is so immense and so deep that it will take many more births for most of us to aspire to tread rightly the path of Action itself. Many of us have, by force of long habit, learned to love the Dirt itself and would be sorry to part with it. We cling to it as a valuable possession. It may take the form of wealth, lands, women, children, artistic taste, literary attainments or political ambition. Every thing that denies to us freedom to escape from it and *every* thing from which we feel loath to separate, be it the most repulsive or the most attractive, come under the category of Dirt. It requires a lot of suffering, experience and thinking to realise that a thing is Dirt. Then it requires another heavy course to realise the distinctness between Good Dirt and Bad Dirt. The further course of minimising the Bad Dirt and increasing the Good Dirt is a highly arduous one which most of us in our laziness and love of ease are not prepared to undertake. Only when the mind is purified by the accumulation of Good Dirt will we become qualified to enter on the higher course of training for tackling the mis-equation of the Soul with the body and the mind.

4. HIGHER COURSES

To first realise that the identification of the Soul with the body and the mind is really a *Mis*-equation, we have to

realise the essential distinction between the Soul on the one hand and the body and the mind on the other. That is, the first step in the realisation of the mis-equation between the Soul and the body or the mind is to disconnect them, in other words, to dis-equate them. The intellectual dis-equation is known as *Vivēka* (Discrimination) and the mental dis-equation is known as *Vairāgya* (Non-attachment). When a thing which we have learned to like separates from us, we are pained. Will not the cutting asunder of "our own" body and mind from us cause us pain and will it be a pleasant process to submit to it? It is bound to be a very painful experience and it is no surprise that most of us shrink from it. He alone that has his mind set on the assured restoration to health in future will resignedly and even happily submit to a surgical operation in the present. If the faith in the doctor or the desire for health is not strong, he will never consent to the operation. The painful practical process of dis-equation is collectively called the Sixfold Sādhana (*Śamādi-Shatka*) consisting of (1) *Śama*, the withdrawing of the mind from the external world, (2) *Dama*, the withdrawing of the senses from the external world, (3) *Uparati*, un-connectedness with the external world, usually taken as identical with Sannyāsa, (4) *Titikshā*, indifference towards the pairs of opposites, like heat and cold, pleasure and pain, in the world without and within, (5) *Śraddhā*, Faith, the factor that sustains the aspirant throughout the course of training and (6) *Samādhāna*, mental equipoise. The ardent desire to escape mis-equation and to be free from its consequences which makes the aspirant willingly undergo the course, however difficult or painful it may be, is known as *Mumukshā* (Desire to be liberated.)

5. THE WAY OF KNOWLEDGE

The aspirant who has almost perfected himself in these

qualifications of Vivēka, Vairāgya, Śamādi-Shatka and Mumukshā, essential for the dis-equation of the Soul from the body or mind, is alone competent, according to the Śāstra, to enter on the higher course of training intended to overcome the non-equation of the Soul with Brahman. Even if we have succeeded in overcoming the mis-equation of the Soul with the mind or body, it does not mean that we can immediately learn to equate the Soul with Brahman. From time immemorial, we have *not* been equating the Soul with Brahman. We cannot, all of a sudden, give up that attitude and take up the reverse attitude of equation. The very idea of the equation of the Soul with Brahman has to be put into our minds and incessantly dinned into our ears till we become familiar with that idea though we may not realise it yet in actual practice.

The Vedānta, which is responsible for this idea and enunciates that equation as a fact, has to be brought home to us by somebody, a Guru, who has abiding faith in the truth of its teachings and has also realised that truth himself. This imbibing of the Vedānta teaching by the qualified aspirant from such a competent teacher is known as *Śravaṇa* (Hearing). The aspirant undergoing this course will have learnt what exactly is the import of the Vedānta and will have become familar with the idea of equation taught in the Vedānta. Still, his long-ingrained habit of non-equation will suggest to him a host of arguments to negative or improbabilise the truth of the equation and raise up lots of doubts in the way of understanding rightly the equation as taught in the Vedānta and by the Guru. Every one of these doubts has to be cleared and every one of the arguments met and answered. Arguments will also be required to probabilise, if not to substantiate, the Vedic equation. This course of mental cogitation for the purpose

of reconciling ourselves to the truth of the Vedic Equation and of repelling the arguments and doubts that suggest themselves to us and stand in the way of such reconciliation is known as *Manana* (Cogitation). The idea of the equation has now become familiar by the practice of constant Śravaṇa and has become an accepted and indisputable fact by the practice of constant Manana. Still a further course is required to make the idea our own. Just as a boy who wants to get a few stanzas by heart keeps on incessantly repeating them till he makes them his own, so has the aspirant to adopt a course of incessant mental repetition of the equation-concept till he makes it his own. This course is known by the name of *Nididhyāsana* (Concentration). There is bound to be effort or strain, as long as the boy has to be repeating the stanzas; if by undergoing that course he has got those stanzas by heart, they become, as it were, part of himself and require no more effort from him, but find a place in his memory from which he can draw them out as he pleases and without effort; there will be no strain in reproducing those stanzas even in dreams. But being extraneous matter *put* into the brain, they may tend to fade away from it by lapse of time or by accession of other more important matter. In Nididhyāsana also there has to be effort or strain for some time till the actual realisation of the equation-concept. But, as more than once pointed out before, this concept is *not* an extraneous matter which is forced into our brain but is only an unfolding of our inherent nature. It is not a new-born thing though it may be newly perceived. Effort is required only to eliminate the obstacles in the way of perception. No effort is required at all to sustain the perception once it is had. Not being a new-born thing, it cannot die or fade away; and being the highest realisation it can never be overshadowed by any higher consideration.

Once had, therefore, it subsists and subsists for ever afterwards. This sustained realisation of the equation-concept when all mental effort has ceased is known as *Samādhi.* He who attains such a state of realisation is a *Brahmavid,* the Knower of Brahman.

6. FURTHER STEPS

The reader will note that the aspirant who perfects his course of Nididhyāsana passes to or glides into the state of Samādhi. That is, his Samādhi is induced by the cessation of the antecedent mental activity. In other words, he cannot enter the state of realisation as long as the mind or the body, its vehicle, is active. Even if he enters it, he is bound to come out of it when the mind or the body becomes active on its equilibrium being disturbed by anything happening within itself or by anything external affecting it, though his outlook on thus coming out of the state of realisation will be entirely different from that of the one who has not known that state. He may therefore come out of the Samādhi seemingly of his own accord or as the result of extraneous causes. The knower who wakes up to the world only as the result of extraneous causes is certainly more advanced and firmer in self-realisation than he who wakes up of his own accord. The latter is called *Brahmavid-vara* (Good Knower of Brahman). The more advanced knower who does not wake up unless compelled by extraneous force is given the name of *Brahmavid-varīyan* (Better Knower of Brahman). The still more advanced knower, who neither wakes up of his own accord nor wakes up at the instance of any other force, but remains ever in sustained Samādhi having disconnected himself entirely from the mind or the body and having destroyed for ever the chance of rehabilitating either of them (and is therefore dead to the world though the body may be breathing,) is known as *Brahmavid-varishṭha*

(Best Knower of Brahman). When the antecedent force which gave that body birth runs itself out, the body will cease to breathe. When such an event happens, even the external onlookers have nothing to point out as the body of the knower. In view of the existence of the body, it was possible to say "Here goes a Knower of Brahman". When even this possibility is taken away by the physical death of the body, we can no more postulate of him as a Knower of Brahman, for he is verily Brahman itself. *He* has this realisation even when he becomes a Brahmavid but, from the standpoint of the on-lookers, it is possible to perceive the above mentioned stages till the seeming embodiment disappears altogether. He *and* Brahman do not *become* one, as some mistakenly interpret the Advaita doctrine. The *and* disappears. There remains but one, the One Reality, call it by whatever name you like. It has always remained one, even when there seemed to be duality, plurality or multiplicity, as the result of the non-equation and the mis-equations considered above.

7. CONCLUSION

It must be the endeavour of an earnest aspirant to first ascertain the stage in which he is at present, the stage of mis-equation or of non-equation, and then probe into and analyse himself till he finds out and catalogues the kinds of mis-equation to which he is at present subject and then pursue the courses of training prescribed by the Śāstra as appropriate to his present condition and capabilities. We are really a very long way off from the final goal; it is mostly idle curiosity which prompts us to know the nature of that goal; but it cannot be denied that a conception of that goal even from the start is not without its value to steady and regulate our efforts so that we may not go astray into side-paths or fall into alluring pitfalls on the way. It is

not to satisfy that idle curiosity that we have tried to explain the great equation in the preceding pages, but in the earnest hope that it may help to remove some of the misconceptions that are common and may mislead even sincere seekers and that the conception of the great equation enunciated in the Vedānta may serve as a guiding star to them in their onward march towards that goal of perfection and peace.

GLOSSARY OF SANSKRIT WORDS

Abhyāsa	..Incessant Practice.
Adharma	..Prohibited Action.
Adhikaraṇa	..Support, Base. Deriv: The Locative Case.
Adhyārōpa	..Super-imposition.
Adhyāsa	..Taking one thing for another.
Advaita	..Non-dual.
Advaitī	..A follower of Non-dualism.
Ahamgraha	..Taking the self as identical with the Deity contemplated upon.
Ajñāna	..Non-perception.
Ākāśa	..The Spatial Element.
Ālankārika	..A proficient in Literary Science.
Ānanda	..Bliss.
Ānandamaya Kōśa	The Bliss-made Sheath, the finest of the Soul's encasements.
Anirvachanīya	..Not describable.
Annamaya Kōśa	..The Food-made Sheath, the grossest of the Soul's encasements.
Antaryāmī	..God as the Inner Ruler, same as Īśvara.
Ap	..The Liquid Element.
Apādāna	..The place from which a thing is moved. Deriv: The Ablative Case.
Ārōpa	..Imposing the conception of a thing on what it is not.

Asambhava ..Not applying to the thing sought to be denoted.

Āsana ..Posture.

Asanga ..Unattached.

Āśrama ..Prescribed Stage of life.

Ativyāpti ..Extending beyond what is sought to be denoted.

Āvaraṇa ..Screening.

Avaraṇa Śakti ..Power of Screening.

Avidyā ..Nescience.

Avyakta ..Unmanifest.

Avyāpti ..Not extending to all that is sought to be denoted.

Bādha ..Negation.

Bhakta ..Devotee.

Bhakti ..Devotion.

Brahmā ..God as the Creator of the Universe.

Brahman ..The Absolute Reality.

Brāhmaṇa ..A member of the Caste of that name.

Brāhmaṇyam ..The state of being a Brāhmaṇa.

Brahmavid ..A knower of Brahman.

Brahmavid-vara ..A Brahmavid who though immersed in Bliss may occasionally wake up of his own accord.

Brahmavid-varīyān A Brahmavid who immersed in Bliss wakes up occasionally as the result of external causes.

Brahmavid-varīshṭha A Brahmavid who immersed in Bliss does not wake up at all.

Buddhi ..Intellect.

Chārvāka ..A man of "pleasant speech", a materialist.

Chit ..Consciousness.

Chitta Śuddhi	..Purity of the mind.
Dama	..Control of the senses and limbs.
Dēva	..A Celestial Being.
Dēvatā	..A particular aspect of Godhead; a Deva
Dhāraṇa	..Retention in the mind.
Dharma	..Law.
Dhyāna	..Contemplation.
Dravya	..Concrete substance.
Duhkha	..Misery.
Gandha	..Smell.
Guṇa	..Quality.
Gunī	..The Qualified.
Guru	..Spiritual Preceptor.
Hiraṇyagarbha	..God as the Pervader of the Subtle Universe, same as Sūtrātmā.
Indriya	..The faculty of Sensation or of Action.
Iśvara	..God As the Pervader of the Causal Universe, the Inner Ruler, same as Antaryāmi.
Itihāsa	..Lit: A historical record. Name applied to Srīmad Rāmāyaṇa and Mahābhārata.
Jāti	..Category, Genus.
Jijñāsa	..Desire to know, enquiry.
Jñāna	..Knowledge.
Jñāna Indriya	..Faculty of Sensation.
Jñāna Yogī	..One engaged in the path of knowledge.
Kāma	..Desire.
Karaṇa	..Instrument. Deriv: The Instrumental Case.
Kāraṇa Śarīra	..The Causal Body.
Karma	..Action. Also, object. Deriv: The Objective Case.

Karma Indriya	. . Faculty of Action.
Ḳartā	. . Doer. Deriv : The Nominative Case.
Kriyā	. . Functioning.
Kriyāśraya	. . The abode of Functioning, that is, the Functioner.
Lakshaṇā	. . Secondary Significance.
Lakshya	. . The Object of Secondary Significance.
Mala	. . Dirt
Manana	. . Cogitation.
Manas	. . Mind
Manōmaya Kōśa	. . The Mental Sheath encasing the Individual Soul.
Māyā	. . The Supreme Power of Brahman.
Māyāvī	. . The Wielder of Supreme Power, Īśvara.
Meemāmsaka	. . One proficient in Pūrva Meemāmsa, the Science of Interpreting the Vedic texts.
Mōksha	. . Liberation from the bondage of phenomenal life.
Mukta	. . The liberated Soul.
Nāśa	. . Disappearance, Destruction.
Nididhyāsana	. . Uninterrupted flow of the same thought.
Nimitta Kārana	. . Efficient Cause e.g. potter for the pot.
Nirvāṇa	. . Liberation, Bliss.
Nishkāma Karma	. . Desireless Action.
Niyama	. . Regulation of Activities.
Pāncha-bhoutika	. . Made of the five Elements.
Pāpa	. . Sin.
Pāramārthika	. . Really Existing.
Parā Śakti	. . The Supreme Power.
Pradhāna	. . Primordial Matter.
Prakriti	. . Root Cause of the universe.
Prāṇa	. . The Life Breath.

Prāṇamaya Kośā ..The Vital Sheath encasing the Individual Soul.
Prānāyāma ..Control of the Life Breath.
Prateeka Upāsanā ..The worship of a Deity through a particular form.
Prātibhāsika ..Seemingly existing.
Pṛithvī ..The Solid Element, the Earth.
Puṇya ..Virtue.
Purāṇa ..The ancient story literature illustrating the Vedic precepts.
Rasa ..Taste.
Rudra ..God as the Destroyer of the Universe.
Rūpa ..Form.
Śabda ..Sound.
Sad-asad-vilakshaṇa ..Different from the existent and the non-existent.
Sādhana ..Practical course of training.
Saindhava ..Connected with the Sindhu. Deriv: A Horse.
Sakāma Karma ..Desireful Action.
Śakta ..One who has power.
Śakti ..Power.
Śakya ..Literal meaning of a word.
Sālagrāma ..A pebble-like emblem wherein Vishnu is worshipped.
Śama ..Control of the mind.
Śamādi-Shaṭka ..The six-fold Sādhanas beginning with Śama.
Samādhāna ..Equipoise.
Samādhi ..Mental equipoise.
Sāmānya Dharma ..Ordinary Law.
Sambaddha ..Related.
Sambandha ..Relationship.
Samjñā ..Proper Name.

Sampat ..Taking a thing to be higher than what it is.

Sampradāna ..Lit: Handing over. Deriv : The Dative Case.

Samskāra ..Impression recorded in the mind.

Samvarga ..Enclosing everything.

Sanātana ..Eternal.

Sānkhya ..One proficient in the system of thought known as Sānkhya which enumerates the categories of things.

Sannyāsa ..Absolute Renunciation.

Śāstra ..Law which rules by enjoining and prohibiting.

Śāsya ..That which is ruled.

Sat ..Existent, Real.

Sparśa ..Touch.

Śraddhā ..Faith.

Śravana ..Hearing the truth from the Guru.

Sthūla Śarīra ..The Gross Physical Body.

Sukha ..Happiness.

Sūkshma Śarīra ..The Subtle Body.

Sūtrātmā ..The Pervader of the Subtle universe; same as Hiraṇyagarbha.

Svarūpa Lakshaṇa..The Essential Characteristic of a Thing.

Tanmātra ..The Prime Element "in itself", that is, in the causal stage.

Tārkika ..One proficient in the Science of Logic.

Tatastha Lakshana..A Casual Attribute.

Tējas ..The Fire Element.

Titiksha ..Sufferance.

Tvam ..Thou, used to signify the Individual Soul.

Upādāna Kāraṇa ..The Material Cause e. g. mud for the pot.

Upanishad ..The last portion of the Vedas, same as Vēdānta.
Uparati ..Cessation from action.
Upāsanā ..Worship.
Vairāgya ..Detachment.
Vaiśvānara ..The Pervader of the Gross Universe; same as Virāt.
Varṇa ..Definite Class in the Hindu Society.
Vāsana ..Tendency.
Vāyu ..The Wind or Vibration Element.
Vēda ..The Supreme Knowledge promulgated by God.
Vēdānta ..The end of the Vēda, same as Upanishad.
Vēdantī ..A follower of Vēdānta
Vijñānamaya Kōśa The Intellectual Sheath enclosing the Individual Soul.
Vikshēpa ..Distraction, Distortion.
Vikshēpa Śakti ..Power of Distraction or Distortion.
Virāt ..The Pervader of the Gross Universe; same as Vaiśvānara.
Viśēsha Dharma ..Special Law.
Viśēshaṇa ..Attribute.
Vishṇu ..God as the Sustainer of the Universe.
Vivēka ..Discrimination.
Vyakti ..Particular thing.
Vyangya ..The idea not expressed but suggested by a word.
Vyāvahārika ..Practical.
Yama ..Restraint.
Yoga ..Attunement, a Means thereto.
Yogī ..A striver for attunement.